The Fellowship of the Horse

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THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HORSE

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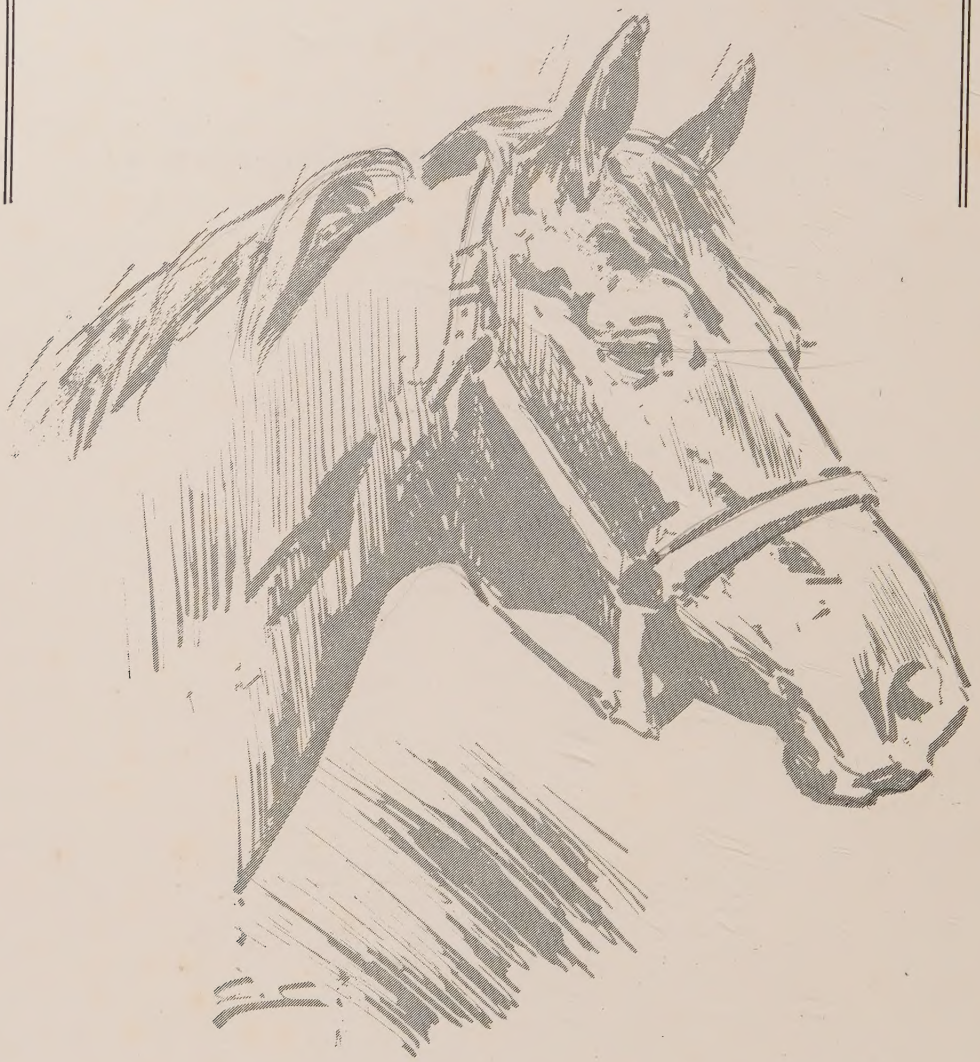

A Happy Horse

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HORSE

By

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Illustrated by

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"WELL did that great man, I think it was Walter Scott, but if it warn't, 'twas little Bartley, the boot-maker, say, that there was no young man wot would not rather have a himputation on his morality than on his 'ossmanship, and yet, how few there are wot really know anything about the matter! Oh, but if hignorance be bliss 'ow 'appy must they be."

HANDLEY CROSS

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The FELLOWSHIP

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HORSE

BARRING: I thought the horse m-meant the same to everyone, General—chance to get the b-better of one's neighbour.

CANYNG (*with feeling*): The horse is a noble animal, sir, as you'd know if you'd owed your life to them as often as I have.

BARRING: They always try to take mine, General, I shall never belong to the noble f-fellowship of the horse.

Loyalties, by JOHN GALSWORTHY.

A HORSEMAN must begin by learning both riding and horsemastership.

Horsemastership is the art of attending to a horse's bodily requirements, and to do so efficiently entails an immense amount of sympathetic observation.

Riding is not just a matter of tearing along at full speed, sticking on, and avoiding falls, it must carry with it an aptitude for applying the aids so as to restrain and guide a horse and overcome his resistance. Here force is out of the question on account of the horse's strength and weight.

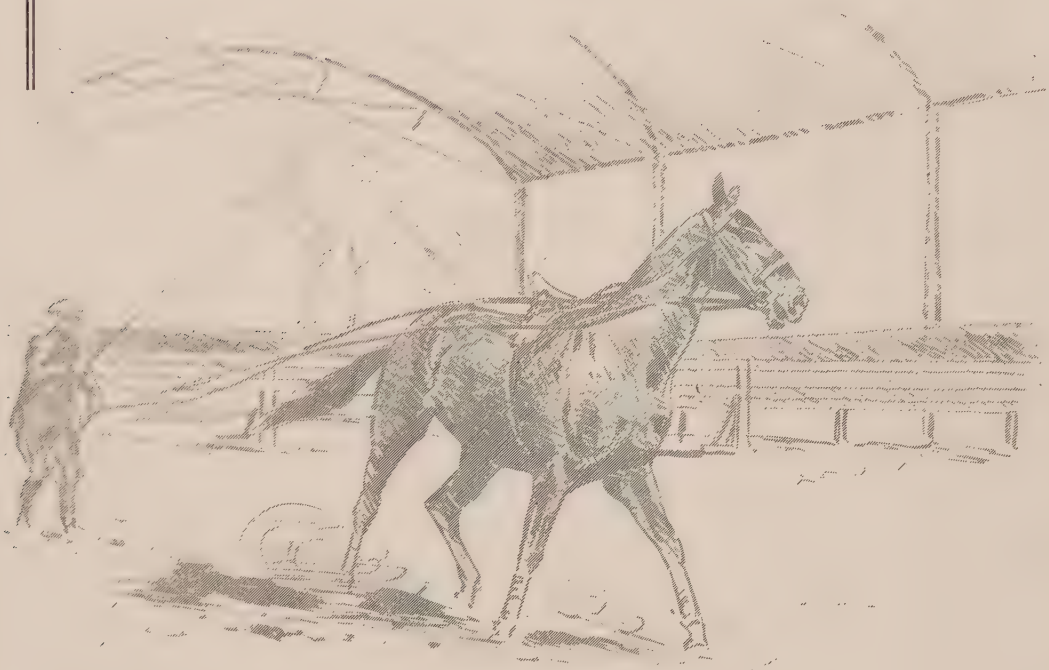
It is, therefore, necessary for every horseman, whether groom, rider, hunting man or polo player, to know not only how to make himself understood, but also to understand what his horse wishes to convey to him. There is in fact a language that has to be learned by both mount and man, and until this language is learned there can be no efficient horsemanship and certainly no fellowship.

The horse is a dumb animal and his powers of facial expression are very limited, so that (except to the keenest observer) his only apparent means of reply are *compliance* and *resistance*. But once confidence has been established, if our means of communication are rational, in other words, if our language is clear, there are only three things which militate against obedience following our commands : physical disability to carry out the task demanded, fatigue and anger ; and it may well be that the last two are the outcome of the first. Often, however, fatigue supervenes as the result of the rider not knowing the signs of its approach, another grave form of misunderstanding ; and anger in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred, is caused by a man acting on the wrong assumption that he has made his meaning clear to the horse when he has not.

If a man has had the opportunity of beginning his horsy career quite young there is a good chance that sensitiveness, the power of perception through the nerves of the whole of the body, will become highly developed. But he must not allow himself to be deluded ; to attain a complete understanding, *i.e.* the true fellowship of the horse, expert tuition, study and unremitting practice are necessary, and in addition, the immense amount of thought that all horsemen have to give to the subject.

A friend of mine, a great polo enthusiast, was once asked by the local padre how it was that he had not been to church lately. He replied that he only went in the polo season, when he found the atmosphere just right for thinking out his bitting problems.

In the following pages my main theme is just this mental attitude of the horseman in his dealings with the horse and the horse's reactions. It is impossible to consider either of them intelligently except in conjunction with the other. We have, in



His only apparent means of reply are compliance *and* resistance

short, to learn the means of communication that have been devised and amended in the course of centuries, a most fascinating side of horsemanship; this when mastered should enable a man to ride any horse that has been correctly taught, which in turn will go comfortably and happily under him.

The two attainments, riding and horsemastership, are only beginnings, and a wide realm of horse lore lies beyond. Is there a short cut to these higher flights of horsemanship or must half a lifetime be spent before one " arrives " ?

Who has not found himself in the company of older and vastly more experienced horsemen and been impressed by the familiarity with which they approach and handle a strange horse, and the confidence with which the horse receives their advances ? We cannot fail to envy the ease with which they accommodate themselves to an animal which they bestride for the first time and the precision with which the horse responds to their handling. When these past-masters dismount they will comment on make, shape, mouth and the " ride " so clearly and surely that there is no gainsaying their criticism, and it is hard to believe that they and the horse were strangers five minutes before. The uninitiated, their eyes open for the first time, will feel that silence is their only refuge, and that there is so much to be learned beyond the practical side of horsemanship that they will almost despair.

They must surely realise their shortcomings and welcome a helping hand to lift them out of the silence and darkness which inexperience and the lack of self-confidence forces upon them, one that opens the door to the wider aspect of horsemanship.

This is a book for all riders, for those who are going through their school and undergraduate days as well as for those who having taken their degree, are still scholars rather than

individuals to be crammed with just that amount of knowledge to fit them for what can be looked upon as a certain task. In short, it is a book for the man who wishes to make his horse " Bridle Wise " and himself " Stable Wise," and who seeks in addition to attain his fellowship—the fellowship of the horse.

In " Bridle Wise " and " Stable Wise " I have tried to help him through two essential preliminaries to the threshold of this fellowship, to instruct him, if not in the more practical rudiments of horsemanship and horsemastership which can only be learned practically, certainly in the next two steps, so that he can at least see that his horses are properly looked after in the stable, so that he can teach them to obey their rider's wishes, and also that he can know what to expect from well broken and well stabled horses.

My critics have called me variously a machine and a crank. No man who is a machine can break a horse or even ride one with any degree of comfort to himself or to his horse, and a crank is just part of a machine. Now I have an intense love for a *good* horse, and all my teaching is with the object of making a horse a " good one " and to encourage would-be horsemen only to be content with a good one. All my research is to this end.

No matter how slender may be our horsy experience, are we not all connoisseurs or at all events would-be connoisseurs ? As that great student of human nature, John Jorrocks, said, it is better to cast doubt on a man's morality than to impugn his horsemanship. Those who think that they have nothing more to learn are self-satisfied fools ; if they reach a stage beyond which they cannot progress they are dunces, and if through mental or physical idleness they are content to stop learning they are just duffers. But the men and women who look upon

learning as infinite, and as the only way to make the most of their talents ; who realise that each item of knowledge gained is only a stepping-stone to further attainment, these are the real connoisseurs whose enjoyment of their talents and hobbies steadily increases with time. There is no standing still ; not to progress in knowledge spells staleness and retrogression.

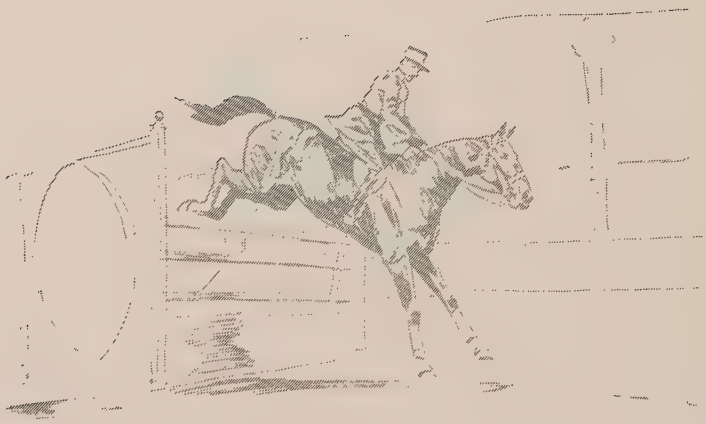
But this is only one side of the picture, and I am not without hope that my readers will have discerned a *double entendre*, that they will think not only of learned research but of fellowship in the sense of companionship also.

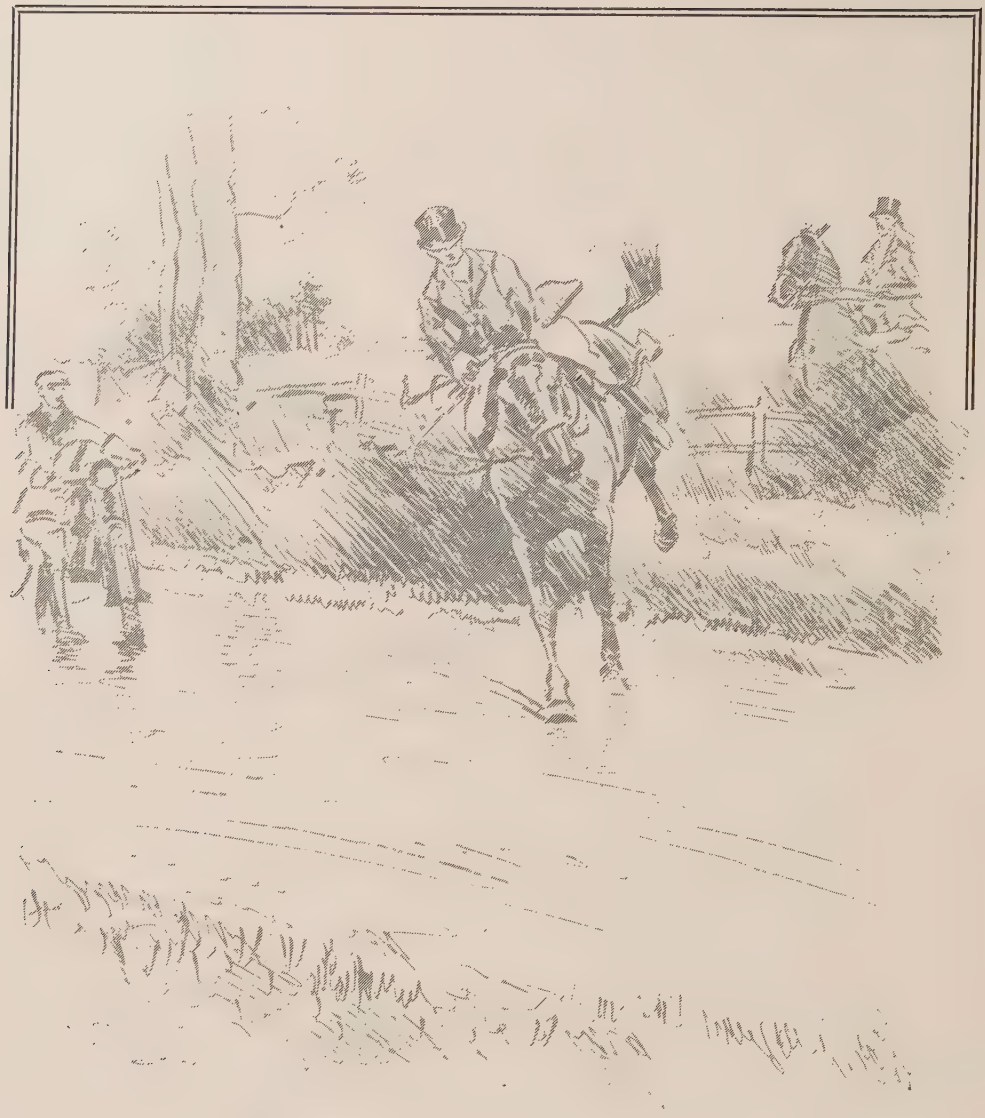
I say without hesitation that extreme mutual understanding (call it sympathy if you will) is the basis of horsemanship, and if I look upon the horse as a slave it is because he cannot be a good *or a happy horse* unless he is trained to conform to the condition of a slave (" one who is wholly subject to the will of another "), and in such a way also that any correctly instructed rider can immediately get on good terms with him. Then, when the education of both has progressed so far, there is nothing left but to increase the understanding that must exist for true sympathy between man, the most loquacious of all God's creatures, and the horse, one of the least articulate. This mutual understanding is the other meaning which I attach to the fellowship of the horse.

And, although not an Irishman, perhaps I may be allowed a " bull " by saying that there is yet a third meaning to my *double entendre*. The freemasonry of horse-lovers makes it impossible for one enthusiast to be bored in the company of another ; a great leveller the horse, and amongst his devotees social barriers are as nought and conversation can never flag.

Extreme mutual understanding is the basis of horsemanship

FELLOWSHIP *and* SYMPATHY





The rider is often the bigger fool of the two

I

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE HORSEMAN

" Full wise is he that can himselven knowe."

CHAUCER

AN important factor for horsemastership and a mutual understanding, is a comparative study of the mentalities of man and horse.

However much thought we give to the pyschology of the horse, our conclusions will be incomplete and often misleading unless we give at least as much to the human psychology. It is not enough to study the idiosyncrasies of various horses that come under our notice. We cannot arrive at practical or even useful conclusions unless we also study the mentality of horsemen in general and also of each individual horseman in direct relation to each individual horse. But people are unwilling either to study the horse's psychology or to make allowances for the equally great variation in the psychology of horsemen. They prefer to assume uniformity in the mentality of the human being, and also to endow the horse with noble qualities of self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, personal affection for man (especially if the man happens to be the owner), a human intelligence—in fact, " qualities of the head and heart " so exalted as to rival even those of saints and martyrs. Whyte Melville maintained that the rider is often the bigger fool of the two. Perhaps he was right.

Where my principles come most into conflict with accepted theory is at the point when it has to be considered whether the

horse will do any work for us except under compulsion. Has he, in short, any *desire* to please, and does he perform his task for any other reason than a failure to realise his powers of resistance? I will at once repeat the warning that fox-hunting is an exception, keenness to be after hounds and a fox seems to be inborn.

" The only work to which a horse can be put, from which it derives any pleasure, and in which it takes any personal interest, is fox-hunting. This is probably due to an atavistic trait. The instinct of self-preservation in the wild ancestor would account for the joy in hunting and slaying a carnivorous animal. I can explain in no other way the keenness in a hunt and satisfaction at a kill some horses display, even though they may never have seen hounds before. The best that can be said of other saddle horses is that they are willing, sometimes even cheerful slaves."

I wonder how many instances have been quoted to disprove my arguments, but they are all based either on erroneous assumption or they are the result of faulty deduction. An example from a recent book on horses reads :

" Music has a soothing effect on horses and is most useful in teaching paces (*sic*). They generally keep excellent time to music."

One of my severest critics insists on a horse's " willing co-operation," and maintains that he relies more upon an appeal to this trait than upon association of ideas acting on the instinct of self-preservation. I have had his words constantly in my mind. I have since broken twenty-three horses and failed with two.

Let me deal with the failures first.

One was a mare that could not be made to exert herself and whose intelligence so resembled that of a human being that she

knew to a nicety just how far she need obey, and where her rider's power over her failed. The other, also a mare, suffered from nymphomania, and in company became entirely beside herself.

I will not speak of the horses I broke before his words were brought home to me, because then I was not looking for "willing co-operation," having been taught that co-operation under compulsion, or at the best unreluctant co-operation, was all one could hope for until a horse was broken. But since willing co-operation has been put before me as something useful in horse-breaking, it has never been absent from my thoughts.

Of course *all* riding, schooling and stable management must be based on co-operation between mount and man. Compulsion on the man's part is out of the question, as the horse is too strong and heavy to be controlled by force. Therefore the horseman must teach him to obey indications in such a way that in time he will come to co-operate. But in its bare meaning this word is too vague, although when qualified it becomes an excellent one to describe the progressive educational phases culminating in the fellowship to which I attach such importance. We employ equestrian tact to steer a horse through these stages. We have to begin with conditional co-operation, to which such actions belong as enticing a youngster forward to obtain a carrot. Thence through co-operation under compulsion via unreluctant to willing co-operation, till finally we reach that quality most desired in a good hunter, polo pony or hack, cheerful co-operation. I can say quite definitely that I have never discovered in the unbroken horse a trace of this willingness to co-operate, although there are always instances that with a little imagination and sentiment can be so interpreted. For example, with horses in which the instinct of self-preservation takes the

form of a keen appreciation of ease, the association of ideas must tend to induce a reverse habit of mind until some such thought as this predominates :

" I will perform this irksome exercise in preference to laying myself open to something more disagreeable." G. B. Shaw, nearly getting hold of the right end of the stick for once, writes :

" The philosopher, Herbert Spencer, though a very clever man had the amiable trait in his character of an intense dislike to coercion. He could not bring himself even to coerce his horse : and the result was that he had to sell it and go on foot, because the horse, uncoerced, could do nothing but stop and graze. Tolstoy, equally a professed humanitarian, tamed and managed the wildest horses ; but he did it by the usual method of making things unpleasant for the horse until it obeyed him."

Now if Shaw had contented himself with describing Herbert Spencer's amiable weakness and Tolstoy's prowess all would have been well, but when he tries to be practical he just voices the common error of the unsympathetic horseman. I am never tired of impressing upon my readers that if a rider uses any aid, be it whip, spur, leg or voice in any way except to resist or counter an unwanted movement, he is simply being cruel, and if thereby he does not actually rouse enmity in his horse, he will at any rate create confusion. The fellowship of the horse is quite out of the reach of those who think they can ride by " making things unpleasant for the horse until he obeys," except in so far as all coercion is unpalatable.

As a contrast let me quote " Crascredo "—picturesque, subtle and to the point as usual.

" It is just in this matter of a horse's dislikes that we fail most lamentably, for we find it impossible to differentiate

between his various dislikings. It is clearly enough laid down that there are two rules common to the education of horses and men, to which there should be no exception. If your man or your horse dislikes something which is necessary, he must be encouraged not to dislike it, and, in the last resort, compelled to do it."

A writer of a modern horse book purporting to be practical, speaks over and over again, somewhat vaguely, of " sympathy," and interpreting the word in its sentimental sense goes so far as to publish a ridiculous and rather disgusting photograph of a horse kissing a man's lips. But as the same writer maintains that a horse " notices the expression of our faces," and adds, " Our gaze will subdue him when he is angry," perhaps he should not be taken too seriously.

It is instructive to consider what sympathy there can be between a horse and his master before we accept any sentimental interpretation. I think the truest interpretation of the word in this connection is the power to act susceptibly and therefore promptly, the rider to counter the intentions of his mount and the horse to obey the rider. Of course our horses must be comfortably housed, suitably fed, and kept clean. Their health must be maintained, their ailments cured, and they must be kept fit enough to perform their task. But we must not deceive ourselves, this is not sympathy but simple economics. A horse's wishes cannot be considered where they differ from our own ; we cannot, for example, allow ourselves to be affected by his desire to cease work and return to the stables when we want him to go on. If his gregarious instinct prompts him to stay with his fellows we have to take active steps to drive him away from them. In fact, every trait that militates against his usefulness has to be repressed, and only the instincts that our skill can

turn into a groove of usefulness must be fostered. What are the latter ? The instinct to seek safety in flight and the other branch of the instinct of self-preservation prompting him to avoid discomfort and pain. I have written fully on this subject in " Bridle Wise."

The most common error noticeable among present-day writers is a mistake in the *opposite* direction, a failure to appreciate the one instance where a horse's natural aptitude and intelligence can be utilised in our service. The idea that a hunter can be made by means of a course of instruction in jumping results in confusion between show jumping, together with the preparation for it, and jumping in the hunting field. Here I maintain *is* want of sympathy. A hunter is born, and no schooling will make him one if he was not born with natural aptitude. The show jumper is trained to jump with machine-like precision by methods which can only be described as an extreme case of disagreeable consequences following a failure to carry out the rider's wishes. (There are other and less pleasant ways of describing a show jumper's preparation.) But to try and train a hunter on the lines of a show jumper is to ask for trouble. And yet nearly every book on the horse recommends it. Show jumps are artificial, stereotyped and collapsible, and the take-off and landing are always perfect. A show jumper has to be made hot and impetuous, a hunter, cool and calculating, he has to weigh up the situation at every fence and to note the ground in front of every leap. He will never be taken unawares. A round in the show ring has nothing in common with the surprises and emergencies of a hunt; in fact, show jumping in time destroys, instead of developing, a horse's imagination and resource, both so important in a hunter.

Nothing in common with the surprises and emergencies of a hunt

Sentimentalists seem unwilling to accept the position that our domination over the horse is for our own convenience and enjoyment; they seem to require an excuse for setting him difficult and burdensome tasks, so they invent attributes. One has only to consider horsy vocabulary to realise this. A horse whose instinct of self-preservation causes him to fear, and therefore to obey his rider to such an extent that he will face almost any danger and go till he drops, is called, in horsy language, "generous," "courageous," "bold"; a horse that is intelligent enough to know how far he need obey, and to what extent he need exert himself, is called "vicious," "a cur," "a coward," "a jade," sometimes even "a pig"; whereas a horse that actively resents interference with his liberty and his desires is called "a savage." There is no fellowship discernible here. All these epithets are misnomers and are the results of failure to appreciate the horse's point of view and his limitations, and above all to realise that our power over him is moral and not physical.

Some of the comparisons of my adversaries who have written letters to the press as well as to me privately, to prove how wrong I am in my conclusions, are worth quoting. One did not hesitate to give his experience with taming wild elephants! But it was a little difficult to answer him or to draw any conclusion from his arguments, as he only stated results and confessed that the method employed was a secret. Of one thing we may be sure, that to resort to force successfully is further beyond the bounds of possibility in breaking an animal of the weight, strength and intelligence of the elephant. But from what I have been told, the reasoning powers of the elephant are great; he actually seems to prefer the security of a life in captivity to the uncertainty and hardship of the jungle,

and he seems to know that obedience and work are conditions of his continuing to enjoy this sheltered life.

Another wrote me dog stories, as if these had anything to do with my subject, and yet another told of a pony who had originally been terrified of motors, but had been made so accustomed to them that it would bite at them. Apropos of this a wag wrote to the Press inquiring what my reply to this was, and wondering if it came within my experience that a horse would bite even a " Ford." He further asked whether the following story would help :

" A Ford drew up at a shop outside which a donkey-cart was standing. " Hullo ! " said the donkey, " what are you ? " " I am a motor-car," replied the Ford, " what are you ? " The donkey, blushing to the tips of his ears, replied, " I am a horse."

But this is all beside the mark ; more to the point is the critic who gave her experience with children's ponies. She found fault with me for calling a horse a slave, and for denying that until he is broken he is a willing co-operator, and further complained that I " strip him of every shred of his nobility."

The rider is on sure ground if he refuses to consider the horse's point of view and if he insists that his own will shall predominate on every occasion, but it is bad psychology if he imagines that he can rely on motives of affection and loyalty in the horse by themselves to produce a desire to serve and please his master. This bad psychology on the part of the horseman is far-reaching. It is not confined to affected phraseology ; unfortunately it re-acts on conduct, engenders confusion as to the effect of punishment, and results in unnecessary harshness by rough, often meaningless application of the aids. The sentimental rider argues, " If he were a good horse he would *want* to obey me ; as he does not, he must be a bad horse, so if I punish

him for his badness it will make him behave." There is no room for the possibility of a misunderstanding in this reasoning, and, in consequence, a horse gets many a meaningless beating and many a job in the mouth. It may momentarily relieve the feelings of an exasperated rider to give the horse a hiding, but it is in no way calculated to bring a rebellious horse to reason ; if a light tap with a whip has not the desired effect, the inexpert rider will hit harder ; if a touch of the spur produces no result, it is followed by a kick ; a job in the mouth follows an ineffectual pull with the reins. All this is wrong, and is always regretted, because with calmness comes a realisation of its futility and of the bad effect on a horse's temper and manners.

So I maintain that if we approach the subject of the horse's mentality from the point of view of reason and observation, rather than of sentiment, not only shall we get nearer to understanding him, but our treatment of him—being in consequence more logical and therefore more rational—will be the more humane. Then if each individual horse's disposition is taken into account, not only by itself but also in conjunction with our own, the beginning of a true fellowship and something akin to a sympathetic bond will have been established.

Now, only if the rider is the bigger fool of the two, can I understand that he would deplore in his mount the stupidity which alone holds him in subjection. If the horse had reasoning powers he would soon learn how far he need obey, and would from the first day he was handled successfully resist everything that did not fall in with his own wishes. Every now and then we do come across horses who are so " cross-grained " that they never submit to control. Unfortunately there is no method of bringing home to these hard cases the fact that they make trouble for themselves. There are no means to make them

understand that irksome and re-iterated lessons could be avoided by compliance. The horse made obedient through rational handling, and never questioning our dominance, soon becomes an unreluctant and then a cheerful slave. He thus ensures for himself a life of comparative comfort, ease and freedom from care, for it is the cheerful slave that finds a more or less permanent home in the horse-lover's stables. If, however, his intelligence, often coupled with inexpert and illogical handling, allows him to realise his own strength and the limit of the rider's power over him, he will certainly become an unpleasant if not a dangerous animal to handle and to ride. No owner in his senses would keep him, and he is of course precluded from selling him with a character and thus endangering someone else. His fate in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is disposal at auction and a descent to the position of a hireling, where the severest toil will reduce him to submission in time and keep him subdued.

But am I so much at variance with my sentimental critics who object to my calling a horse a slave? A slave, according to my dictionary, is "One who is the property of and bound to obedience to another." Does not this accurately describe the horse's relation to man? His owner has powers over him of life and death; he can sell him, and he demands implicit obedience. In return the animal is kept clean, fed and housed. This to my mind is a state of slavery. Anyhow, it is no use disputing about a word that has a definite meaning and conveys a definite impression unless we alter our treatment of the subject of the epithet to suit our amended phraseology. To these sentimentalists I would say, if you don't like your horse being called a slave stop treating him like one.

A horse has to be taught obedience like a child in order to

become a co-operator, and even a slave is not coerced all the time, but having been taught obedience he knows better than to disobey.

So if we wish to avoid the word " slave," and to treat the horse as a noble animal, I see nothing for it but a complete change of heart and a revision of our customs and procedure till we improve even on the Arab's attitude. Our horses would then not have to spend their leisure in confinement and would never have to be compelled to work. They would have to be reared and treated as one of the family; and we must, furthermore, cease to perform on them the most ignoble of all mutilations.

If we wish to develop the *inherent*, latent capacities of docility and intelligence of which some writers speak so sentimentally, we must select the parents differently. At present, speed, endurance, strength and soundness are the main points of consideration in this selection. I repeat that the horse which acts as a cheerful slave is wise, and one that refuses is a fool. The example of the elephant quoted above is a guide. The cheerful slave leads a comparatively pleasant, care-free and sheltered life, and the passive or active resister finishes up in a hawker's cart, if he is not actually destroyed.

If the horse " works till he drops," which, according to convention is considered a noble thing to do, this to my mind is *abject* slavery, and I find it difficult to agree with my critics and to credit him with nobility of nature for it. The truth is that he does not dare to stop, and that his rider, being no horseman, and having no fellow-feeling, has failed to realise that his horse is flagging.

II

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHOICE OF A HORSE

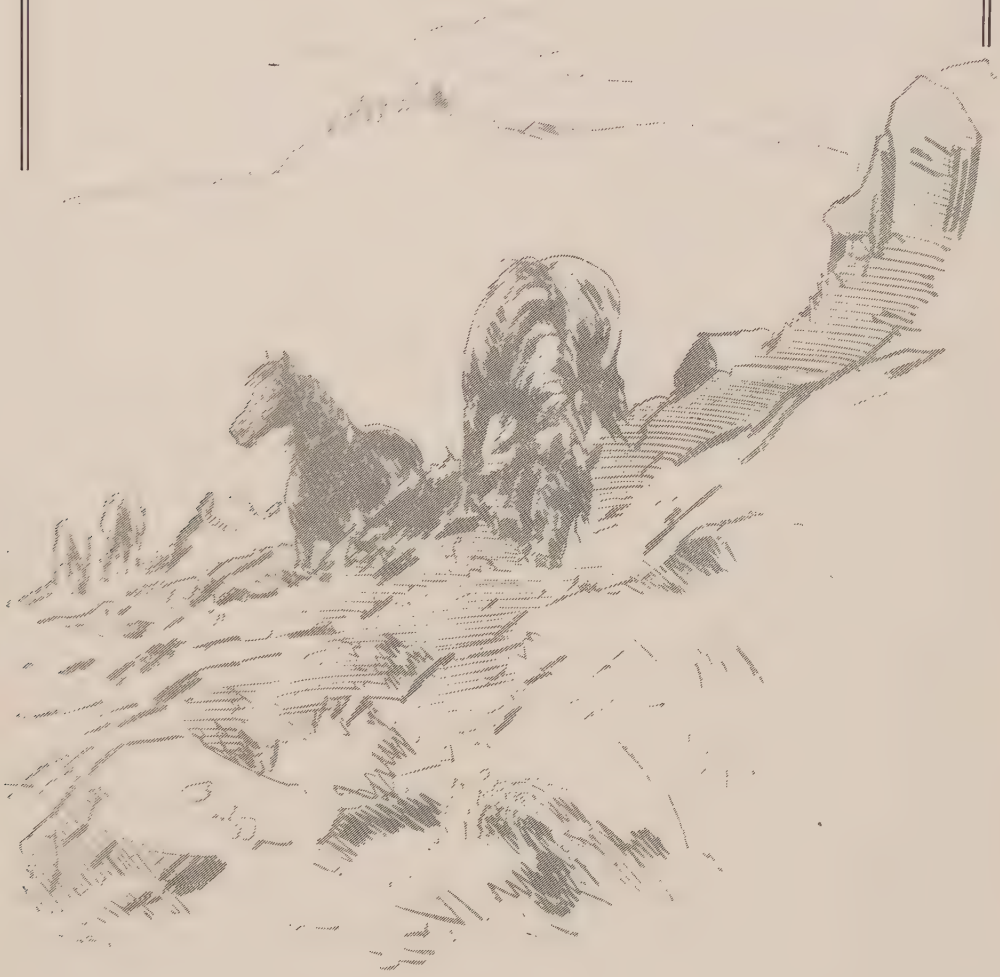
" To 'unt pleasantly two things are necessary—to know your 'oss and to know your own mind." SURTEES

I FIND (and should welcome the opinions of others) that the smaller the horse, the more nearly his intelligence approaches that of a dog, so when discussing small ponies we must have in mind a different and higher standard of intelligence from that of full-sized horses. This is the reason why an admixture of pony blood from an ancestor (a dam), not too far remote, is by some considered desirable in the polo pony ; it is thought that it makes them more tractable, and easier to train. They appear to learn more quickly and more thoroughly to play polo. They do not as a matter of fact play with that dash and blind obedience characterising the well-trained thoroughbred, which I myself prefer, but they do seem to understand the game. While this may help a player on occasion there must be times when the pony has an appreciation of the situation different from his rider. This is definitely unsympathetic and there is no fellowship here ; indeed this anticipation must of course be considered a fault in a polo pony, but against this has to be weighed the ease with which he is schooled.

When therefore we talk of our native ponies (the mountain and moorland type or their descendants) and making them quiet for children to ride, we are discussing one thing, and when we talk about schooling young blood horses for hunting and polo we are talking about something else. People who under-

take the latter begin where the child's pony-trainer leaves off. Moreover, they are dealing with a big and powerful (often artificially fed) animal of unimpaired stamina, whereas with the true pony the trainer is dealing with an undersized creature that for generations has had to scratch precariously for a living, dependent on its own resources for food, water and shelter from the weather. The resistance to control of such a pony is feebler, and the change from uncertain, arduous life, often involving privations, to comforts undreamed of, must be most welcome. With the hunter and polo pony the change from well fed ease and freedom to a life of exertion, full of difficult and strenuous exercises, must be galling and irksome, although the hunter's life, after his breaking is over, has its compensations. Hence we have in the one instance docility, as the outcome of contentment (a phase of the instinct of self-preservation), and in the other case resistance, or at all events impatience of control, a phase of the same instinct. If such a horse did not resist at some period of his breaking we can assume that his constitution has suffered from under-nourishment or from a debilitating disease at some critical period of his youth.

It is often written that a lesson once learned is never forgotten. I regret to say that this is more likely to hold good of learning undesirable habits than of acquiring virtues. A trick learned in five minutes may take a month of schooling to eradicate, and a rider with nervous, clutching hands may in one short run turn a trusty hunter into a refuser. Five minutes injudicious handling by an incompetent rider can undo years of careful and successful training, and it can never be said of a horse that he is " fool proof." This often accounts for vagaries which appear otherwise unaccountable. It is difficult for an owner to know everything that befalls his horse, because his



An undersized creature that for generations has had to scratch precariously for a living

groom has the care of him in the stable and also rides him at exercise, and it is well-nigh impossible to get a man to report an untoward incident. There is a similar reluctance on the part of the owner to tell his man of some successful resistance on the part of the horse. A fearless report would warn either to be on the look-out for a recurrence. An overfresh horse, no matter how well he is broken, will have a tendency to spin round towards home at the sight of any object that may catch his eye. This foolish irresponsibility has nothing in common with vice, but unless his rider is skilful enough to counter and resist this movement it can easily become vice, and the horse will have a tendency to spin round the next time he sees the same object. This mutual practice of reporting even trivial incidents is essential to true fellowship.

Again, we must be careful not to draw wrong deductions from our observations when considering the intelligence and affection of the horse. Recognition of those who have been in the habit of feeding them and the power of finding the way to the stable are the outcome of the instinct of self-preservation, and they are not signs of affection on the one hand or of intelligence on the other. In this connection it is amusing to compare the horse with the most learned of the human race. The common type of anecdote about our learned professors generally depicts them as losing their way in their own street, failing to recognise their own families and similar aberrations. I am myself an absent-minded rider, vague as to my surroundings, unobservant of landmarks and with an indifferent eye for country ; but I do not consider myself for this reason, inferior in intelligence to the horse that carries me and that knows the way home. As a matter of fact this form of nostalgia may be noticeable in the *unbroken* horse ; but when

broken he should pass even his own gate unless he is asked to turn in.

By some it is maintained that horses learn to differentiate between different trumpet calls. " They know trumpet and bugle calls much better in the field than most soldiers."[1] I have made experiments. A stable of horses at feeding time will behave exactly the same if " charge " is blown as they do at the call of " feed," and they get just as excited at " feed " when they are drawn up in a line at the end of a ride and when they are expecting the " charge." A cornet played in a passing char-a-banc will excite horses at grass just as if they heard the hunting-horn.

I have studied the mentality of the horse all my life, but must admit that I have not got beyond the fringe of the subject. There are two reasons for this. First, a horse's powers of expression are so limited that it is often impossible to imagine what he is thinking about, what is his trouble, what is making him discontented and restless. This is our main difficulty. Secondly, I have been obliged, as have most owners, to leave much of my horses' exercise and their care in the stable to the groom, so that the opportunity for observation is in the hands of two individuals, and however close the liaison between the two it can never be complete.

This much my experience has taught me. One must never draw conclusions from isolated examples and one must be practical and never sentimental. One must not endow the horse with a human or even a canine understanding. His intelligence is in no way comparable with that of a dog, or, for the matter of that, with any other domesticated animal; it is different.

[1] *Riding and Schooling*, Major R. S. Timmis, D.S.O.

It is therefore necessary for the horseman to cultivate his powers of observation and to take every opportunity of widening his experience by the study of many and varied examples, so that by this means he may avoid the danger of generalising from isolated instances.

Above all, he must learn to draw *correct* deduction from his observations and resist the temptation to see exalted motives in commonplace actions.

A horse will avoid treading on a fallen man just as he will avoid a molehill or a rabbit-hole, but if his safety is in jeopardy he will consider nothing else. I once tried to buy a hunter from a girl who, before she would agree to part, wanted to make the most elaborate stipulations as to the mare's ultimate fate if ever I should decide to re-sell.

Her reason for this was that " the mare had once saved her life." This was the story. Leaning over to open a gate she had been pulled off and had remained hung up by the skirt of her habit, head downwards. The mare had stood rock still for what had seemed hours, but which proved in reality to be some minutes only, till she was freed by a passing labourer.

Her owner firmly believed that her mount, realising the danger she was in, had deliberately refrained from moving for fear of hurting her. This particular mare was a demon in the stables, and to groom her was like a battle ; outside she was better, but very restless and inclined to squeal and kick. If we look at the matter practically we can only come to the conclusion that it was fear for her own safety that made the mare stand still. Such an unaccustomed obstacle hanging in such a position impressed upon her the fact that, for her own sake, she had better not move. This should be considered side by side with the means sometimes adopted to prevent a horse from

The mare had stood rock still for what had seemed hours

kicking in the stable. A small bag stuffed with hay can be strapped to a hind fetlock. A fore leg should be held up while this is done and the horse carefully watched as the fore leg is released, for although it usually has the effect of deterring him from kicking, presumably because he is afraid this strange thing will hurt him, just a few horses will kick with redoubled vigour in order to free themselves. The horse I have described, fortunately, did not belong to the second category. In the end my sentimental friend had to adopt a more reasonable frame of mind and to drop her stipulations, or she would never have found a customer. The mare was ultimately sold at auction, and her fate would, in the end, be the common one of all worn-out horses.

So it must not be assumed that the sentimentalists always act up to their ideas ; far from it. Every single thing that militates against a horse's value and usefulness to man is rigorously repressed, and his particular likes and dislikes are only considered in so far as is compatible with value and usefulness. He is restrained by bit and curb and urged by whip and spur. When no longer capable of work he is usually destroyed. When he falls below his owner's standard of usefulness he is sold to another owner, usually more exacting, so that it is odds on his lot becoming harder as his years advance. I can never see anything in a horse's treatment that shows that his owner considers him a noble animal.

As said before, the Arabs more nearly approach this ideal. Their horses are brought up almost as part of the family, the males are not castrated, and, further, they are never hogged, docked or clipped, or condemned to solitary confinement.

I very much doubt if we could adopt their method of treatment for many reasons. Our climate is against it for one thing,

our national character for another, and anyway our mode of life prevents it. The horses in Prince Mohamed Ali's stud in Cairo, after their desert holiday, are stabled more or less under European conditions, and as a result they are not so docile as those that have never been in loose boxes.

The Prince told me that his horses do not take on the true Arab characteristics until they have spent some months in the desert. This accounts for much of the difference between the Arab bred in his native environment and that bred in this country. (See Chapter IV.)

But then the selection of sire and dam at this great stud is not on orthodox lines. The Prince has made a collection of old prints and drawings showing the traditional Arab horse, the horse of poetry and romance. These serve as his guide, and it is his aim to breed to this standard. Every sire and dam, as well as their progeny, are studied with this ideal before him and the tests are applied with almost mathematical precision. Any that fall short in the minutest detail are ruthlessly weeded out and sold.

Photographs of some of the horses placed alongside old prints show how surely he is approaching his goal. In reply to an unguarded question as to the utility of a stud of horses that were never ridden, we were told that the attainment of an ideal need have no utilitarian object, and just as we in Europe hang beautiful pictures on our walls to look at and to admire, so he has his beautiful horses. I must say that those we saw, especially those that had already spent their maturing months in the desert, excelled in beauty any work of art it has ever been my good fortune to see. Here is a phase of the fellowship undreamed of in this country.

The guiding principles governing the selection of the sire

and dam of our English thoroughbred stock are soundness, speed and endurance ; it is the blood of the thoroughbred that permeates our saddle-horses, and, as impetuosity is one of the most desirable attributes in the racehorse, the result is, that free forward movement in the offspring has to be controlled and guided into a path of usefulness in order to make a hunter or polo pony. This is as it should be, for if this free forward movement does not come naturally of itself, and if it has to be created by whip and spur, there is only hope of a limited success.

An important point in considering the psychology of the horseman from the point of view of true fellowship, is that a rider must have it firmly engrained that riding and breaking are inseparable. Good riding is horse-breaking nearly all the time. *All* riding must carry with it a certain aptitude for applying the aids in such a way as to overcome the resistance of the horse. This *is* horse-breaking.

Bad riding is unworthy of any consideration other than how to improve it. The way to improve it is first to study the scientific application of the aids, and then to practise until this becomes automatic. But one cannot hope that all riders will apply the aids alike ; strength, nervous energy, apathy, absence of mind, health, all affect a man's use of his legs and hands. And, as we get the same variation in the sensibility of horses as in that of men, a clash of temperament is inevitable if a rider bestrides a horse which does not suit him, or which he does not understand.

It is unfortunate that as the horse loses his freshness the rider usually tires also. This is a problem, but if it is approached with thought and intelligence it will be found that the realisation of the problem involved will provide its solution in that compromise which leads to expert handling. This can

be described as sympathy or expediency according to the sentimentality of the rider.

Not so easy of solution is the problem of the tired man on the fresh horse ; and yet this is another problem that often faces us as we mount our second horse after a gruelling morning, or towards the end of a polo match when we pull out a pony for his first chucker.

This clash of temperaments, the rider's and the horse's, is an important point, but one that is too often ignored. It needs almost a life-long, intimate experience of a large number of horses for a man to be able to deal successfully with all that come his way. How rare is this experience one realises when about to engage a new groom. I have interviewed young men who can own to ten or fifteen years' experience among horses, and when questioned on the point, can only lay claim to intimate knowledge of a dozen or so. I have known men of mature years who have hunted since they were boys and who have not ridden to hounds more than twenty or thirty horses.

Wise men realise that a certain type suits them and will buy no other ; others not so wise, fail to realise that it by no means follows that, because they *see* a horse going well, it will necessarily prove a pleasant ride for them. Many men and women begin their careers on an old, staid, experienced hunter, which carries them in comfort and safety, induces a real taste for the sport, gives them nerve, and, freeing their minds from personal anxiety, enables them to concentrate on keeping with hounds. It is their second venture that so often presents difficulties. They will want something younger, faster and altogether more dashing, but it is doubtful whether there has been sufficient improvement in their horsemanship to warrant so drastic a change.

Vanity and the lure of cheapness are responsible for men making offers for unsuitable horses too hastily. They disregard their limitations and fail to take into consideration the difference between their experience and skill and that of the seller. A trial undoubtedly adds to the price of a horse, but it is invariably worth the extra cost.

There are, therefore, two ways of avoiding a clash of temperament. The most satisfactory way, of course, is to be horseman enough to break a horse to suit yourself. Failing this, there is nothing for it but a personal trial with hounds or in a chucker, before purchase. The best way to obtain this trial is by paying for it, adding a proviso that, should the horse suit, there is liberty to make an offer, and it is wise to be explicit and direct in making the arrangements for this trial and the subsequent offer. I know many men are, for some reason, shy over the matter and prefer to leave it nebulous, rather than clear-cut.

A dealer in a big way of business once told me that one of his chief difficulties was to prevent his customers buying unsuitable horses, animals too difficult for them altogether. Here the lure of good looks or the Point-to-Point is responsible as well. Good looks mean quality, and quality means fire, dash and pace. A Point-to-Point horse nowadays is a racehorse, and it is very rare that he will be a pleasant or an easy hunter for any but the finest and most courageous rider.

It is, therefore, important for a man to study his own temperament and capabilities with as much care as he enquires into those of his prospective purchase, and equally important that he should bear in mind his own idiosyncrasies in all his dealings with horses. A horse will go lazily with one man and full of fire with another. Some men make all their horses pull, and are conspicuously at variance with them ; others seem always

to be on good terms. Some excel at stopping and steadying an impetuous horse, and some are good at driving a sluggish one.

When buying a horse, therefore, a man should stipulate for a trial that will enable him to make sure (as far as it is humanly and equinely possible to be sure) that the animal will suit him. Part of this trial ought to be a day with hounds or in a game of polo. The former should begin with a hack on to the meet, the latter should consist of two chuckers in a fast game. If possible both should be followed by a night in the purchaser's stable and a veterinary examination. Then for the trial to be complete for modern requirements, one ought to know whether a horse is quiet to box, not only in a railway horse-box but also in a motor van and in a trailer.

There are so many possibilities for disappointment that the condition of a fortnight's trial (on which a friend of mine insists *and pays for*) hardly seems out of the way. I believe he has to return a certain number for one fault or another, but his stud *does* suit him and I believe his system is the cheapest in the long run.

Anyway, a horse that suits will never be dear, whereas if you allow yourself to have landed on you one with which you are out of sympathy, whatever the price, it cannot be anything but a bad bargain.

Horsemen are apt to lose sight of the fact that they are dealing with an animal whose instincts have only prepared him for the life mapped out for him because a way has been found to dominate him by means of superior intelligence, but they can at least select a horse whose conformation is suitable to the particular walk in life for which he is intended. Conformation is a point on which we can be reasonably sure. To put it crudely, one too often sees the attempt to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. It requires courage to face the fact

that we have bought an unsuitable horse ; but there is only one way out of it—we must sell. It is no use persevering in opposition to our better judgment.

It requires more courage to face the fact that we have *bred* a bad one, and more courage still to admit to ourselves that the whole of our breeding is on wrong lines and that we must begin again. And yet we know in our hearts that the sooner we face the facts, the less our loss in money, time, energy and thought. Life is far too short to persist along incorrect lines with a breeding stud of horses. It cannot take less than twelve years for a man to build up anything approaching a successful stud, and then only if he has had the foresight, knowledge, judgment and *luck* to start on sound lines ; but it is obvious that there is not time in a man's life to make many false starts.

The decision to cut our loss and scrap our venture whether in buying or in breeding cannot be easy to make, because I see around me men persevering with hunters and polo ponies which they must know in their hearts will never be a success with them. I am myself a persistent offender, and yet I cannot recall an instance when I have regretted scrapping a doubtful animal, and I do not like to think how often I have obstinately hung on to failures in spite of (possibly because of) family warnings. The perfectly correct and logical opinion of a friend tactlessly expressed has, I regret to say, often been the cause of prolonging the struggle, in spite of the inevitable failure that stared me in the face.

Of course I could give many examples of both accountable and unaccountable vagaries in horses (every horseman of experience can), but I have been brought up in the hard school of scepticism that rules out horse, dog, and fishing stories. I will nevertheless allow myself three.

III

HORSES AND—HORSES

" The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers."

OMAR KHAYYAM

A GOOD HORSE

PROVIDED that I am satisfied as to the integrity and judgment of my buyer I rather like to have a horse bought for me. A man who is buying for you can always shelter himself behind the plea that he is acting for a client, and that he has in the first place to report, and in the second, that he has to make very sure, by means of an exhaustive trial, that the animal is suitable. Moreover, my very modest stud of hunters has to suit a variety of tastes. I should like to buy for my son something not far short of a Grand National Winner, but there are his sisters to consider, the age-stricken parents, and last but by no means least—hard times. There is, therefore, a certain advantage in being, so to speak, " landed " with a horse, for the selection of which no one of the family is responsible and of which it is up to us all to make the best. So one Christmas Day, hearing that a very careful friend of mine had, after an exhaustive trial, bought a very promising hunter, I telephoned to him and succeeded in making him sell it me for a modest profit and decided to send for it before he could change his mind.

I went to the cottage and imparted the news to my groom. He offered to fetch her at once, but I said that I should not dream of disturbing him, as not only was it snowing but he

was entertaining a Christmas party. However, he said he'd rather go there and then, if it was all the same to me, and, besides, his party was *only his wife's relations*.

We have her still ; she is a dark bay mare 16.1, up to 15 stone, whereas the heaviest of us rides 13.7. Her bit is a snaffle. For her name the family consulted a planchette, which promptly wrote " Fairisle." When asked why " Fairisle," the answer came " Because she's a brilliant jumper." So " Fairisle " she was christened.

From the first day she was my wife's favourite hunter and developed personality more marked than any horse I have known, but in her first season she was terribly headstrong. She had her own ideas about most things, and if thwarted she would buck and plunge most expertly. She was, and has always been, a somewhat lethargic hack, and at exercise makes the impression of a conscientious athlete, walking and trotting with the express purpose of keeping fit, but on her exercising rounds in the lanes she welcomes any little variation to their monotony. One lane is along the golf links, and she cheers up on nearing the course ; she watches with great interest, always noticing the click of the club as it meets the ball and her eye quite unmistakably follows its flight. At covertside she will stand very still, as if conserving her energy, but she always shows an awakened interest before the fox breaks and often before hounds even speak.

My wife has often made the remark, " There's no fox here, look at ' Fairy,' how bored she is," and often the mare will begin to fidget and edge towards a certain side of covert, and it will be safe to bet that a fox will break there. At the end of a run in which her rider has taken a successful line, there will have been one or more occasions when the mare will

It will be safe to bet that a fox will break there

have decided whether to be placed left-handed or right at a check, and for which side of an intervening covert to make. If an attempt is made to thwart her in these decisions there may be a battle royal or a marked loss of interest on her part if she is taken out of her chosen line. Needless to say she is a fine jumper, and although she does not appear to be fast, she somehow makes it dead easy to see the whole of the fastest hunt.

On the few occasions that she has fallen she has waited patiently to be mounted, even when hounds were running and other horses streaming past. This gives one a pleasant feeling of co-operation, and makes one feel that keen as she is on a hunt, it would be no good to her without a rider. This companionship and feeling of mutual enjoyment is to my mind an important point in a good hunter.

Her stable companions, none of them mares, all make annoying efforts to get near her at covertside and at a check, and although she welcomes their approach, lady-like, she makes no advances herself. She often neighs after clearing a big place, and always when the pack runs into their fox, and I have never known her so tired as to be willing to leave her greatest friends, the hounds. At grass she has always an attendant swain in one of the other horses. On one occasion the favourite of the moment left her for another mare ; she appeared to tolerate this desertion with equanimity till the lady who had supplanted her had to be taken into the stable. Espying the faithless one hanging about the yard-gate through which her rival had been taken, she walked over to him with the most evil expression on her face that I have ever seen on a horse, cornered him and attacked him with the utmost savagery. They were separated with difficulty, but matters were never the same between them.

She is very greedy, consequently it has been easy to teach

her to do all sorts of absurd tricks for a piece of sugar or a carrot. She is quite easy to handle or catch when running out; she will let you mount her and will give you a lumbering ride of sorts without saddle or bridle. She is a model of patience when sick or injured.

When my son went to the 'Varsity his mother sent "Fair-isle" up for him to hunt and she ran second in the college grind. He found that when she went with the drag, much of her keenness left her, it was not a fox-hunt and there was no chance of blood. Once at a kill her rider was given the brush, but was soon glad to get rid of it for someone to carry, as the mare went nearly mad with excitement. One year we showed her in a heavy-weight class; here again she seemed to realise what was wanted and rose to the occasion. All her lethargy left her and she braced herself up to a great effort, and we thought we had never seen her look so handsome. She was placed third out of twelve. I know I ought to have bred from her, but we hadn't the heart to spare her from hunting.

A BAD HUNTER

The period covering the time between the last day of polo and the first day of hunting is one fraught with danger to the horse lover. On the one hand he may be tempted to buy a polo pony and land himself with the expense of keeping him through the winter (no small consideration if well done), on the other hand he may fall in love with an unwanted hunter and no hounds to try him with. It was just at this season, one Saturday at the end of August, that I was induced to look at a show horse. A rapid calculation told me that if I bought him that very day he was eligible for a coming local show demanding a month's ownership, so taking a sudden resolution I set about buying him.

My groom did not like him, he said he had a cunning face. I could see nothing wrong with the horse's expression, but my man would not change his mind. His pedigree indicated the high-sounding name of " The Comet," but later the children christened him " The Falling Star," which they seemed to think suited him better.

I took him out for a hack; in company he went well, but the return journey alone was a different story. He drifted about as aimlessly as a lost dog, although he cheered up when we got into the High Street of our market town and caught sight of his reflections in the shop windows. To these he neighed in a most companionable way, making quite determined efforts to reach what he evidently thought were long-lost brothers. Our progress through the streets caused much amusement, and I had many disrespectful inquiries by telephone in the course of the afternoon.

He did not get a prize at the show, but he was placed fourth, and his " reserve " ticket in the harness-room is all that is left of him except a memory that, even at this long interval, is like a bad dream.

The only enthusiasm or sign of interest that he showed out cub-hunting was for repose. He stood stiller than any horse I have ever known, like the statues on the new buildings in Regent Street that so much impressed a visitor to London, and which turned out to be bricklayers. We might have called him " Bricklayer." Perhaps he too belonged to a Trade Union and had some obscure rules about maximum tasks and overtime.

I was the first member of the family to hunt him. He was much admired at the meet. He stood with his head well up and his ears cocked, but I soon discovered that whether he was

facing covert or not, whether hounds spoke or whether they drew blank, he maintained the same wrapt expression, and I could only conclude he was admiring the scenery.

A fox broke and was hallo'ed away. I did not feel his heart beating a single pulse faster, and if I had not driven him forward he would have stood his ground for ever.

We set off, he galloped well, I steadied for his first jump ; the way he came back on to his hocks left nothing to be desired and I approached the thorn hedge with confidence. He stopped dead with his chest touching the thorns. Thoroughly exasperated I was just going to turn him to have another try, when he jumped fiercely and unexpectedly. However, he only cleared in front and left his hind legs on the take-off side.

His weight crashed down the fence, and gaining a foothold he managed to struggle clear. " Have I staked my horse ? " I called to a man on my right. " No, you're all right." So we went on through a gate on to the worst kind of tarmac with some oak park-palings on the other side. Too formidable an obstacle, and with such a chancy horse not to be thought of, so I decided to look for a gate, but " The Comet " decided otherwise, and before I could stop him he took off from the slippery road without a falter and cleared the fence. I was in the act of looking over my shoulder to call to my wife not to follow, when we dived into an obvious rabbit warren that no self-respecting hunter could fail to avoid, and came down. Although not hurt I was afraid he might be discouraged. Possibly he was, and possibly it accounted for the fact that when he galloped off he went in the *opposite direction to hounds and the field*. It is an experience ignominious enough to have to chase your horse when there is some hope of your friends catching him for you, but it was something new for me to find

myself running the wrong way, and after a very few minutes of such a chase as I had, there was not the slightest sign of the hunt or anyone connected with it. A compassionate motorist stopped and gave me a lift. A mile down the road we heard that my " mount " was in a farm-yard, and here we found him being much admired by the farmer's home circle and being fed with sugar.

For the rest of the day, and during the succeeding days that I hunted him, my feelings alternated between a faint hope that he would eventually make a hunter and a murderous exasperation. He fell less often than might be expected, but he apparently had three ways of jumping. One : perfectly (this seldom) ; two : stopping dead after having convinced you that he was going to have it and then to jump after having convinced you that he was not (this was almost his normal style) ; three : charging the obstacle with the utmost gallantry but omitting the formality of rising at all (this took place only at specially selected places and usually ended in a fall). I sent him to the local horse-breaker and rough-rider with a full description of his vagaries. Two days later he telephoned to ask me to take him away. I asked why. " Well," he said, " I generally get horses that I am afraid will *kill me*, but with your beauty I am afraid I shall be tempted to kill *him*." I asked him to try him out hunting, but he declined without thanks.

There was another and not unimportant side to my difficulty. The ingenuity displayed by the family in finding excuses for not riding him was slowly but surely impairing their moral fibre, and I believe I should have got rid of him at any price if I had not thought it bad for my groom to prove himself in the right.

But my luck was to turn. I was asked by a veterinary

He only cleared in front and left his hind legs on the take-off side

surgeon whether I could guarantee my chestnut horse quiet with hounds. I said I could, but I felt it my duty to add that I could also guarantee him not to jump when wanted, and that, although fast, I could further guarantee that however slow the hunt, he would never get to the front. I had to turn my head away to conceal what the Victorian novels call the " joy light in my eyes " when the answer came. " That's just what I'm looking for." It turned out that his client had taken a fancy to " The Comet " one day when he was following in his motor-car, and only wanted to ride about the lanes. He was to be examined the next morning. On the way to the stables I said to the children, who came out to see the last of him, " He's never been sick or sorry since he came, but it would be just like him to pull out lame this morning." He did it all right, lame as a crutch, and I do not know which was the more crestfallen, my groom or I ; the family yelled with laughter. However, the veterinary surgeon took a lenient view and said he would come again next day, and if then sound and I would give a warranty he would accept him. All went well, or I think I should have shot him. I saw him two years later. He still looked very statuesque with his new owner at covertside, and we met occasionally in the lanes, where I saw him standing like a rock, entirely unmoved, while the hunt swept past. I hear he became the apple of his owner's eye and that £300 wouldn't have bought him.

NOT A HUNTER AT ALL

This was also a summer purchase, and again no hounds to try her with. Mary Rose, a bay thoroughbred mare, six years old, as pleasant a hack as a man could wish for, and a neat and temperate jumper in cold blood. Her first day's hunting was

a late cubbing meet. She stood quietly enough until hounds came out of covert near to her, and then she went mad. I had schooled her well and was able to restrain her or I don't know where she would have taken me.

I was puzzled ! She broke out into a sweat and evinced the greatest excitement, and I foresaw a tear-away ride if we should get a run. However, I was wrong. I got a bad start, but the mare went beautifully and took her fences in good style ; but when hounds checked I found I could not get her within a field of them. When they swung my way she turned tail and galloped in the opposite direction in spite of anything I could do. I was soon thrown out, and once away from the pack she became her placid self again and in five minutes was as dry as a bone.

This was something outside my experience, so I sent her to the local horse-breaker. After a couple of hunts he advised me to sell her, as he considered her dangerous. He, too, found that at the approach of hounds she lost her self-control and became quite unaccountable. He told me that a neighbouring dealer was prepared to give a good price for her if he found that he could ride her with hounds. I was out with them the day of the trial. There was a very big field and I only saw him occasionally, bowling along well away from the pack and having no trouble at all. At the first check I saw him wink at my horse-breaking friend and stick his thumbs up after the manner of our Tommies when they wish to convey that they are on a good thing. My hopes ran high. Alas ! hounds were cast his way, and as they came through the gate from the next field the mare positively galloped backwards and finished up in a ditch, in which she sat, putting her rider over her tail. The deal, of course, was off, and I ultimately took a wickedly low price from

a riding-school in a neighbouring town, which, being situated far away from the country, did not give her any chance of meeting hounds.

The next time I saw her was on the stage in " The Arcadians," a touring theatrical company having hired the quietest animal they could hear of, to take the part of the race-horse in that play. The riding-master at the school told me she was most reliable and the pleasantest hack on which he had ever put a beginner.

She was sold from there to a well-known hard rider in a Yorkshire stone-wall country, and I believe eventually he was able to send her along in a hunt, but it was always a hazardous adventure, and she never got over her antipathy to hounds. She came to have a pair of very big knees, contracted on those occasions when, as her new owner puts it, " Mary didn't rise." She ran well, and was placed in a Point-to-Point.

FACTORS *in* FELLOWSHIP

IV

A QUESTION FOR THE FELLOWS

HEREDITY AND CONFORMATION

" It will not out of the flesh that is bred in the bone."

HEYWOOD

JAMES FILLIS, a great exponent of educative riding (miscalled in our horsy language somewhat unpleasantly " Horse-breaking ") writes, in his advice on buying horses :

> " With respect to breed, we find in the first line of this book, the cry of my heart : ' I teach only thoroughbreds.' I unhesitatingly put thoroughbreds above all others. They are pre-eminently the best for all kinds of work. Besides, a man who has got into the habit of riding thoroughbreds will not care to ride any other horses.
>
> For me the ruling qualities of the thoroughbred are the lightness, the elasticity of the fine steel spring which puts them into action, and the suppleness which will be developed by breaking. If we listen from afar off, for the sound of his foot-falls, we shall hardly hear them on account of the lightness with which he puts his feet on the ground. He skims the ground, which he treads with a delicacy full of energy. The feet of other horses, compared to his, clatter and hammer the ground, and their paces are much heavier."

Every experienced horseman tries to buy a thoroughbred if he can afford to pay the price. But the cost of such a horse up to weight and with the schooling necessary to make him a comfortable ride, is often prohibitive. One should then go

for one so well bred that in appearance *and action* it is as like a thoroughbred as possible.

Now it behoves the horseman to ask himself this question. What useful hereditary qualities can I look for, apart from the qualities that environment and training can supply ?

I once bought a thoroughbred by a stallion which we will call X——. I sent a Fellow of the R.C.V.S., a man of wide experience of thoroughbred stock, to examine him for soundness, and his spontaneous comment at the end of the certificate is worth quoting. He wrote, " I do not know whether you have any experience of X——'s stock, but I have known many of his progeny and I never knew a bad one by him. They all take to hunting without any trouble."

Had this horse not been of exceptional symmetry this remark would have left me cold, but as I was very pleased with his make, shape and action I looked upon it merely as a confirmation of what my eye could see.

I wrote in *Bridle Wise* of the great part played by make and shape in deciding whether or not it is worth while to proceed with the education of a resisting polo pony, and have been asked so many questions about heredity and its application not only to polo ponies but to hunters and other saddle horses also, that I can see the direction in which I can usefully amplify what I have written. My view is definitely that suitable inherited *conformation* is the most important factor. This is followed closely by soil, environment, and early training, while the theory of inherited *temperament* and other mental qualities must be received with great reserve.

By some it is thought that my view is too pessimistic. " Is there not," they ask, " thought and brain behind it all ? " " Can we not look for *mental* improvement from one generation

to another ? " And in this connection I am given examples of heredity in dogs, to show how easily they can be trained if they have been bred from parents who know their job.

But this is confusing acquired *physical* characteristics with the susceptibility to instinctive actions, to environment and to teaching. I quote from *Heredity*, by J. A. S. Watson, B.Sc., F.R.S.E. :

> " It will be seen that if such characteristics are ever inherited, that we must assume some very intimate connection between various parts of the body on the one hand, and the reproductive organs on the other. Some such connection as Darwin assumed in his Pangenesis theory. Finally, we have the difficulty of conceiving any mechanism which would bring about the inheritance of modifications."

and I add :

> " It is now universally accepted that the development of any particular organ or set of muscles in the parent, and during their lifetime, will produce in the offspring no corresponding modification. We have only to reduce the Darwinian theory of Pangenesis to the absurd by instancing mutilations and amputations in the parents."

I cannot go into scientific explanations of the many puzzling points of heredity, for the simple reason that my knowledge of the subject in its wide aspect is not sufficient, but I should like to deal with it in so far as it comes within my experience as applicable to the horse, a subject which I do claim to have studied, and to set down, if not my own knowledge certainly my perplexities.

As a beginning I will give the examples which I use in *Bridle Wise* to emphasise the points quoted :

> " The problem we have to solve is this, and the question is neither new nor original. We breed from a young,

> unbroken mare and obtain a foal ; the mare is then broken and taught polo, at which she excels. She is then once more put to the stud, and, by the same horse, breeds another foal. Will her later offspring be easier to teach polo than her first ? The example of the entire racehorse illustrates the point better, as in this case we could widen our experience. Before trying him for racing he could go to the stud and serve a large number of mares. Then, after winning a series of races, he could again serve the same mares. The question here is : would the second batch of foals be more likely to be winners than the first ? The large majority of biologists say ' No.' Neither the mare's polo training nor the development of the stallion's racing powers can affect the offspring, and this we must accept."

But we can go a step further than this. Let us assume that a first-class racehorse, through having been badly ridden, has in consequence had his temper spoiled and has lost his form, and with it his capacity for winning. Would one expect the foals got by him after he ceased to be a good racehorse to be worse horses than those born before ? My answer, for what it is worth, is unhesitatingly " No."

Then, again, it is assumed by many that " physical characteristics " apply to the externals only, that they must necessarily be visible to the eye ; but is there not in addition texture of bone and tissue, the sensibility of the nervous system and its power to respond (shall we say the " conductivity " of the nerves), the shape and volume of the brain, and the cubic capacity of the body containing the vital organs ? Further, there may be temporary derangement of digestion, loss of health due to under or over-feeding. All these points play their part in affecting a horse's temperament, his docility and his powers generally, and have to be taken into account in the treatment of the animal from his earliest youth.

If the owner is also the breeder, he may be fortunate enough to be able to vouch for the logic of the varied treatment that has fallen to the young horse's lot up to the time he begins to turn him into a hunter or a polo pony ; more often, however, the youngster only comes into his possession and under his notice for the first time at five or six years old.

With many of the young horses that I buy I have at first to spend considerable time in giving them confidence both in and out of the stable—confidence that has been lost through treatment unsuited to their nervous sensibility and degree of education. It does not take much to make a young horse, new to the stable, first suspicious and then resentful. He is surrounded for the first time by four walls and is thereby prevented from seeking safety in flight, his natural instinct whenever hurt or threatened. The amount of corn he can stand has also to be found out ; you can drive a horse mad with an excess of corn.

This brings out two points : firstly, that physical characteristics are not only the externals visible to the eye, and secondly, that it is not possible to separate so-called temperament from suitable or unsuitable conformation and rational or irrational handling and feeding.

Then we have the question of environment. I will give some examples. I am convinced that by practising polo manœuvres (which include breaking to stick and ball) in the field where unbroken ponies are running out, the youngsters, when they come up, are easier to teach from having watched the others being schooled.

Horses have become used to motor-cars and tarmac. They seldom shy at the former, and have learnt how to adapt their action to the latter.

The children of musicians, it is true, inherit the make and

shape of fingers and arms as well as the conformation of the skull, the texture of the brain, muscle and nerve. But apart from this, the atmosphere of music in which they live from their earliest infancy, must tend to make them more susceptible to music and to give them a better understanding of it. One could multiply instances *ad infinitum*.

I find it impossible with my finite mind to imagine certain accepted facts, such as space and infinity, and just as impossible to imagine that the microscopic germs of reproduction can be affected by chance physical or mental development in the parents (especially in the sire) in such a way as to bring about corresponding mental and physical modifications in the offspring. Although I admit I can prove nothing, I am, with the miracle of paternal likenesses before me, quite ready to admit that such a phenomenon can exist, invisible to the human eye and unappreciated by man's understanding ; but were I able to bring myself to accept such a possibility, then if a polo pony bred three foals—one before she learnt polo, one after she had become proficient, and the third after she had, *through bad riding*, become so sick of the game that she would no longer play—one would have to assume that the second foal would be the easiest to school, and the last the most difficult.

Does not this seem too far fetched, and does it not seem to explode the theory of the transmission of mental characteristics ? To me the theory seems absurd, and the accident of the parent having actually played polo cannot make any difference, although the fact that her conformation is such that she *could* play polo will make all the difference in the world.

Mendel and the later scientists who have worked at the subject are far from having solved the problem of heredity, and I, an uninformed amateur, am even more in the dark.

Youngsters are easier to teach from having watched the others being schooled

There are foxhounds that inherit extraordinary tendencies. One will always run along under the whipper-in's off-side stirrup as his father used to ; another will always carry a piece of broken-up fox in his mouth to the next covert, as his mother did. There is an authentic instance of a man who inherited a walking-stick from his great-grandfather, and discovered that the ferrule was worn down in the same peculiar and characteristic way as his own, and on enquiry he found that neither his father's nor his grandfather's sticks showed this peculiarity.

We see in nature the improvement of breeds by " natural selection," but such improvement is always towards better equipment for the battle of life (the theory of the survival of the fittest). In domesticated animals artificial selection *accelerates* improvement by eliminating from the stud the least suitable for the task demanded. Obvious examples are weight-carrying power in the hunter, speed in the racehorse, milk-yield in cattle, and the egg-laying strain in fowls, but these are all improvements along the lines of nature, and there is nothing resembling the artificiality of polo.

Now, cannot *mental* characteristics be altered by selection ? As the savage disposition is apparently eliminated from the domesticated races of dogs, why cannot a strain of horses be produced with mental characteristics particularly suitable for hunting and polo—gameness, dash, speed, combined with controllability ? I contend that environment plays so great a part in making the companionable, tractable dog, that if you were to turn a thousand loose in the woods, where they had to fend for themselves, the weakest would die and the remainder would quickly revert to a wild state.

But polo-playing, and indeed carrying a man and bending to his will are such entirely unnatural performances, that there

One will always run along under the whipper-in's off-side stirrup as his father used to

is nothing in a horse's instinct that can be developed by selection to form a race to play a game with complicated man-made rules. Speed and stamina can be developed and soundness and conformation can be improved by selection; but we must look to environment and teaching for the necessary mental qualities, and to suitable make and shape, for skill.

At the same time it is no use shutting our eyes to the phenomena which surround us. There must be something more than make and shape, or even mental attributes, that is transmitted; in fact, the tendency to perform definite actions must spring from somewhere. There must, for instance, have been an original cuckoo who discovered the profitable trick of laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, and it is unbelievable that the original bird taught the dodge to the next generation. And who teaches the young cuckoos to oust the rightful heirs from the nest? So also with nest-building. How does each succeeding generation of birds know how to make nests exactly like their parents? But here we have the added complication of a branch of the instinct of reproduction.

Does not this show that it is all too subtle, obscure and difficult for anyone to form a useful working theory on the transmission of mental characteristics, and moreover, where does it lead us to and how is the fellowship of the horse involved?

I am convinced that we must draw a well-defined line between evolution along the lines of *natural* selection and the products of *artificial* selection. In nature, the instinct of self-preservation becomes more marked from generation to generation, as the encroachment of civilisation intensifies the need for cunning and resource. Nature has always in view the survival of the fittest, which from her standpoint are those best equipped in the wild state for the struggle for existence. With animals

bred in captivity, on the other hand, the problems of ways and means do not arise, because the sheltered life solves them all. The selection of sire and dam is made with a definite human, as distinct from a natural, purpose, and the need for self-protective action lessens. Therefore, with the horse it follows that with each succeeding generation the tendency to inherit the instinct of self-preservation weakens.

Now this instinct of self-preservation acts in two ways. It renders a horse impatient of control, because of his love of freedom, and it makes him fly from a threat. The former has to be *overcome* in breaking ; the latter, which is the only trait of which we can make any use, has to be *guided* into a groove of usefulness. This usefulness is the goal of the breeders, the selectors of the parents.

We can therefore expect, as a result of the sheltered life referred to, a desire to escape disagreeable consequences to intensify, and resistance to control to weaken. The nett result is that with evolution there is a slight (very slight) increase of docility.

The question of those inherited qualities of mind which are summed up by hunting and polo men as " temperament," can be, and are, left to take care of themselves in the selection of sire and dam, but conformation and action are rightly considered paramount.

This is the guiding principle of our agricultural societies and at horse shows ; the brood mares and stallions are awarded prizes and premiums for their make, shape and action, pedigree not being considered, and it is the prize and premium winners that are the parents of the next generation.

That is the first point I wish to make. The owner and breeder, to be successful, must have a wide knowledge of con-

formation and action, and must have firmly in his mind the type most suitable for the task demanded. He must familiarise himself with the shape and action that experience has shown make for soundness, that give the power to carry weight, with speed, endurance, and comfort to the rider.

Animals possessing these qualities are the only ones to buy for one's own use and to breed from. Even if we are considering the fate of a favourite hunter or polo mare, we should not send her to the stud unless she possessed the desired physical points of conformation, and freedom from any deformity.

My second point is (and I again emphasise it at the risk of reiteration), having bought or bred a sound, symmetrical blood horse, we must handle it scientifically from the start, in and out of the stable—each individual animal according to its " temperament "—*i.e.* its power of resistance and nervous disposition—and not on stereotyped lines. Thus and thus only have we any hope of success.

V

"EQUESTRIAN TACT"

"Build a Silver Bridge for a flying Foe."
OLD PROVERB.

FROM the first day a foal is handled, the exercise of tact will avoid many of those fights for supremacy, the outcome of which is always uncertain. By making the lessons and exercises as pleasant as possible to breaker and horse, irritation to both is avoided. Any rider of experience, even if he has not actually become exasperated in the course of breaking or schooling, will call to mind occasions when his temper has been near to breaking point.

A well-known horseman, and a successful schooler of scores of horses and ponies, once asked me whether, in the whole course of my experience, I had ever schooled a horse right through without wishing at some stage or other that I had never bought him; without thinking to myself that if I could recall the transaction I would be willing to cancel it, get back my cheque and be rid of the animal. While I do not take so pessimistic a view as that, I must admit that there usually comes a time in the breaking, schooling and riding of every new horse when one has reason to ponder. Apart from some unsoundness (such as an incipient curb or a splint on the crooked foreleg that we forgave when we bought him) it is usually an exhibition of temper or waywardness that causes the wave of doubt. These occasions call for the display of "Equestrian Tact," the thoughtful horseman realising when he must not push matters too far, when he must change the point at

issue, and show, by making the task demanded easier, that obedience is the line of least resistance.

A celebrated breaker, from whom I had my early lessons as a boy, used to dismount and deliberately remove his spurs and lay aside his whip when he felt his temper going, for he was a man of little education and less self-control, and had had on previous occasions cause to regret angry and meaningless floggings or spurrings. Owners do not like to receive their horses back from the breaker with weals and spur marks, and his own horses had sometimes been unsaleable for months for this reason. I think, too, the time it took him to dismount, unbuckle his spurs and remount, gave him pause to pull himself together and avoid acting when in a state of blind rage.

When dealing with a horse, a man must say to himself, "I must never be vindictive, I am incapable of losing my temper and I will never raise my voice ; I may allow my face to assume a *determined* expression if necessary, but never an *angry* one." It is a remarkable fact that one's physical control of the expression of the countenance can affect the state of one's mind. It is difficult to give vent to anger if one deliberately maintains a calm exterior and refrains from raising the voice. It is a good plan in such moments to whistle or sing.

Another important point to bear in mind is that unless one uses the aids (hands, legs, spurs, whip and voice) rationally, the effect on the horse's mind is simply that he has been caused pain, and there is nothing educative but only a cause for apprehension and confusion. The horse's mind is such that he has not the kind of intelligence which can connect punishment with an offence committed, unless this punishment takes the form of an opposition to the rebellious movement.

When, for instance, a horse shies at an object, he will turn

When a horse shies at an object, he will turn his head towards it and swing his quarters away

his head towards it and swing his quarters away. If the rider can oppose this side movement, and prevent it or correct it, well and good, but if through being taken by surprise he allows this fleeting moment to pass, he will be guilty of want of tact if he attempts to punish his mount after the shy is made. There is no means of conveying to the horse, " What I am doing to you now is in retribution for your recent foolish display of alarm." Possibly there was no real alarm, but being " fresh " his shy was simply exuberance. In any case, how useless is punishment which the victim is unable to connect with his misdeed! The only result could be a feeling of surprise followed by resentment; in fact the next time he shied he would probably dash off in anticipation of the punishment which followed last time. The dreaded object would awaken a memory and induce a train of thought which in its turn would recall disagreeable consequences.

A dog will often show that he has a bad conscience, and he will give away the knowledge of a misdeed even so far as to come for the punishment, that he feels he deserves, before he can be lighthearted again. But a horse has nothing of this about him. He probably does not even know he has done wrong, but the punishment that followed his action sticks in his memory.

During the war I had under training hundreds of recruit drivers, N.C.O.'s and officers. One of my stock questions in the examinations on horsemastership was: " If you have a horse in your charge that becomes restless and unruly at feeding time what would you do about it? " Strange to say, the reply usually was " Feed him last," and the explanation of this extraordinary answer was invariably " To teach him to wait his turn." Here we see the horse wrongly credited with the power

to reason out for himself such a belated lesson. How can it possibly come home to him that if he ceases to be restless he will get his food sooner ? Now many of these drivers had been grooms in civilian life and many of the officers had ridden and hunted since they were children, so they should have known better. Of course they remembered that they had been similarly punished in the nursery for a display of greed, but they forget that their case would have been explained to them in words. Whether such treatment is tactful in the case of children does not concern us here, but I can assure my readers that the result on a horse would simply be to increase the commotion and have no salutary effect whatever.

In breaking to stick and ball it is unwise to let the pony know that by going wide of the ball or by going over it he has defeated us. He is liable to try either of these methods to prevent the ball being struck, and the tactful thing to do then is to avoid rating or punishing him, but to try next time to be ready with all the aids to keep him moving smoothly forward at the correct distance for the hit.

The rider has, besides applying the other aids, to pull the reins to indicate that he wishes his horse to stop. Sometimes for some cause (ignorance, impatience of control or exasperation) the horse does not obey this indication at once. For the rider then to job him in the mouth and continue to do so in a spirit of vindictiveness simply inflicts pain without teaching anything. These are three simple forms of tactlessness, which are nevertheless not uncommon.

One of the difficulties a rider has to contend with is to make the horse change his lead. While the horse is learning, say circling to the left and leading correctly, it would be tactless to try to make him change to the off lead in order to turn *away* from

the gate by which he entered the breaking enclosure. The tactful thing (if the horse is still being taught the change of lead) is to ask him to change his legs at a turn *towards* the place for which his instinct makes him hanker. This is making the lesson easy, and later when it has been learned, and the pupil has realised what is wanted, the habit of changing for every turn will soon be established.

A rider often experiences difficulty in making a horse pull up smoothly. The method usually adopted is to gallop down a hedge-side, ten yards away from it, to pull up to a stop, jump round (turning inwards towards the hedge) and to spring forward again at the gallop. It would seem obvious that the best way is to slacken and turn at a different place every time so that the pupil does not become routined, but at first it is more tactful to perform the manoeuvre at the *same* place every time, so that the horse, in anticipation, gathers himself together in preparation and so learns how to do the stop and turn smoothly and easily. Then when this has, through practice, become almost effortless we can make him do it at a different place every time, and further vary the exercise by stopping him as if for the turn and then to make him spring forward again in the same direction. The value of " routine " as a means to an end in horse-breaking must not be despised.

The attempt to cure the refuser is often mismanaged. It is necessary here to discover first whether the horse is suffering from pain or unsoundness. Needless to say, these adverse conditions must be removed before the horse is asked to jump again. Should, however, the refusal be unaccountable, the breaker must be guided by the horse's disposition and previous performances in selecting a method of correction. Beating or spurring in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is *not* the way,

If they are difficult to catch it means that a want of tact has been displayed

and, further, the man in whose hands the horse has learned to refuse is *not* the one to undertake its correction.

Horses at grass sometimes have to be brought in nightly for shelter. If they are difficult to catch for this purpose it means that a want of tact has been displayed. My method is this : When the animal is turned out a convenient hour should be selected, and it should be before feeding. He should be taken to the gate, and whilst still held should be fed from a salver, while the groom gives the particular whistle or call which he is going to use when he wishes the animal to come to him. The next day if he goes to the gate at the same hour with the salver of oats, and gives the same call, the animal will come to him immediately and will allow itself to be caught. I have generally found that after about two or three times the animal will be waiting for him. This method saves time and avoids the necessity of chasing and cornering him.

Tightening girths and grooming can afford elementary examples. If a horse lays back his ears and snaps at the groom we may be certain that rough methods have been used. In common with other dealings with the horse, it is a short process to get them resentful, and very tedious and slow (often impossible) to restore confidence.

Let me stress the fact that in every problem provided by the horse's resistance to control, thought and intelligence will suggest a tactful solution. Roughness, and with it the infliction of pain, will only cause misunderstanding and an increase of the difficulty.

The best results will, of course, be obtained when a step by step system of breaking and schooling has been adopted, the rider can then at any time go back to some previous exercise that the horse can and will perform, and again work forward from that.

FELLOWSHIP *in* TRAINING

VI

THE DURATION OF A COMPLETE COURSE OF SCHOOLING

" Be as patient as an ox, as brave as a lion, as industrious as a bee, and as cheerful as a bird." SERBIAN PROVERB

I APPROACH this subject with reserve. Some of the young people, who by stating their difficulties and by their questions helped me to write *Bridle Wise*, have asked me to give some idea of the duration of a complete course of breaking and schooling. My critics remind me that throughout the whole of the book I have pointed out the impossibility of laying down any rules for this, and that any attempt to do so would be a contradiction of my own theories. I think, nevertheless, that it might be helpful if I set down my experience in general, and then in such detail as can be furnished by actual examples.

The examples chosen, it will be noticed, are all of polo ponies, for the simple reason that their training is the highest a horse can get. The man who is breaking a hunter must decide for himself how far he wants to go with his horse's general education ; it will depend on his capabilities as a rider, no less than on the horse's conformation and breeding.

I will describe quite briefly a few typical cases. Among them will be the shortest and easiest course that I can remember and the longest and most difficult ; another which I can characterise as a normal course from the three-year-old to the finished article ; one which appeared for a long time to be a failure but which through perseverance turned out to be a

success, and another where breaking proceeded on the easiest and simplest lines and produced in the end a useless animal.

With the hunter I have this to emphasise: we have to start with the idea that he is born rather than made, so that a failure should be more quickly apparent.

It is no use persevering when our better judgment tells us that we have started on unsuitable material. I can recall many instances where I have wasted my time and energy, often from a sense of false pride, the result of having been told that I should not succeed. It requires strength of mind to make this decision, more so to-day than formerly, because there is no sale for a bad horse. There used to be *some* job that could be found for him, if it were only in an omnibus or tram. I can remember very vividly what I may call a typical instance of misdirected perseverance.

One morning there rode into my yard a farrier-sergeant of Yeomanry, on a small blood-horse which he wanted to sell. As I had at the time a horse that was a failure as a hunter (his idea of jumping was to take every fence by the roots) and as it was only a charger that was wanted I proposed an exchange. The visitor tried my horse and I tried his, both passed the test satisfactorily, and with a certain sum to boot from me (it is ever thus) he rode off with my horse, and I was left with his.

The next morning my new purchase had to go into town to be entrained for camp. The special train had to be kept waiting half-an-hour for him. Finally he arrived with a very exhausted groom. It seems the brute had dodged up every side street, and there were many, had drifted about the road neighing like a lost soul, had jibbed and reared, swung round, and, indeed, committed every atrocity known in the equine world.

It can be imagined that I did not look forward to my

It is no use persevering when our better judgment tells us that we have started on unsuitable material

first ride. In strange country he did not make such a bad start, but as he got to know his way about he would try to nap for home every few minutes. I got to hate the sight of him, still more riding him, but with the enthusiasm (and vanity) of youth I persevered. I gave him to be tried as centre in one of the guns but the cunning rogue would not pull an ounce. The end came one day on a route march, when he reared and wheeled round with me, coming down upon the water-cart horse and bringing him down with him. No one was damaged, but I decided, or rather my major decided for me, to gratify the " I told you so's " and not to ride him again.

I took the trouble to trace him to the ignoble end which I felt sure was in store for him. I sold him to the local Carriage and Tramway Company for £25, on condition that they asked me no questions and expected no virtues except his obvious good looks.

Later I had the curiosity to ask the yard foreman how they had got on with him. He told me they had begun with him in a hansom-cab, but he had reared over backwards into that. As one of a pair he had also " downed tools " and refused to move a yard, and had thrown himself down. Two men with broomsticks had failed to make him rise so they had turned the fire-hose on him. His next trial was centre horse in one of their three-horse buses (they drove three abreast). He allowed himself to be dragged a quarter of a mile by his two companions, without having put one foot in front of another, sliding the whole way. Then he again threw himself down, and broke a pole. That, said the yard foreman had been their last attempt. " What finally became of him ? " I asked. It appeared that at the time the remount buyers were scouring the town for horses, and my beauty was the first animal in the huge stable to catch their eye.

However, I had no intention of letting the matter stop there, so I traced him to his depot, and warned the C.O. of the unit of Yeomanry to which he was issued, to be careful. He promised to keep me posted. The troop-commander to whom he was issued, somewhat of a wag, wrote from South Africa. " Your horse has done his bit at last. We have been captured by de Wet so often that we have earned the title of ' de Wet's own,' and last time he said that if we didn't have better horses ' He'd be damned if he'd let us go next time.' The only one he liked was your bay, and as he commandeered that for himself I hope he breaks his neck."

I think the original farrier-sergeant must have had bad hands, because I heard that the horse he got from me had also got into the way of rearing and had fallen on him, a stroke of poetic justice.

If a correct scientific course of breaking is followed, the average time required to school a pony or a hunter, rising five, is three months, after which it should be ready to play slow polo or take his place in an educational hunt. This estimate is based on the assumption that the animal is in condition, sound, of suitable conformation, and a straight mover. I further assume that it has been backed and is a pleasant straightforward hack.

An older horse will take longer, especially if there is some fault of mouth or carriage to correct. An untried polo pony will benefit by half a season's hunting with a light weight, and be an easier animal to school. A young hunter will be the better of a summer's hacking, interspersed with his school work. For the second half of the hunting season the pony should be rested. A pony that has played a season should be rested at grass for the greater part of the winter, and should not be hunted at all unless it has shown some definite objection to polo ; in

this case a season's hunting might have the effect of settling his mind and bringing him to his senses.

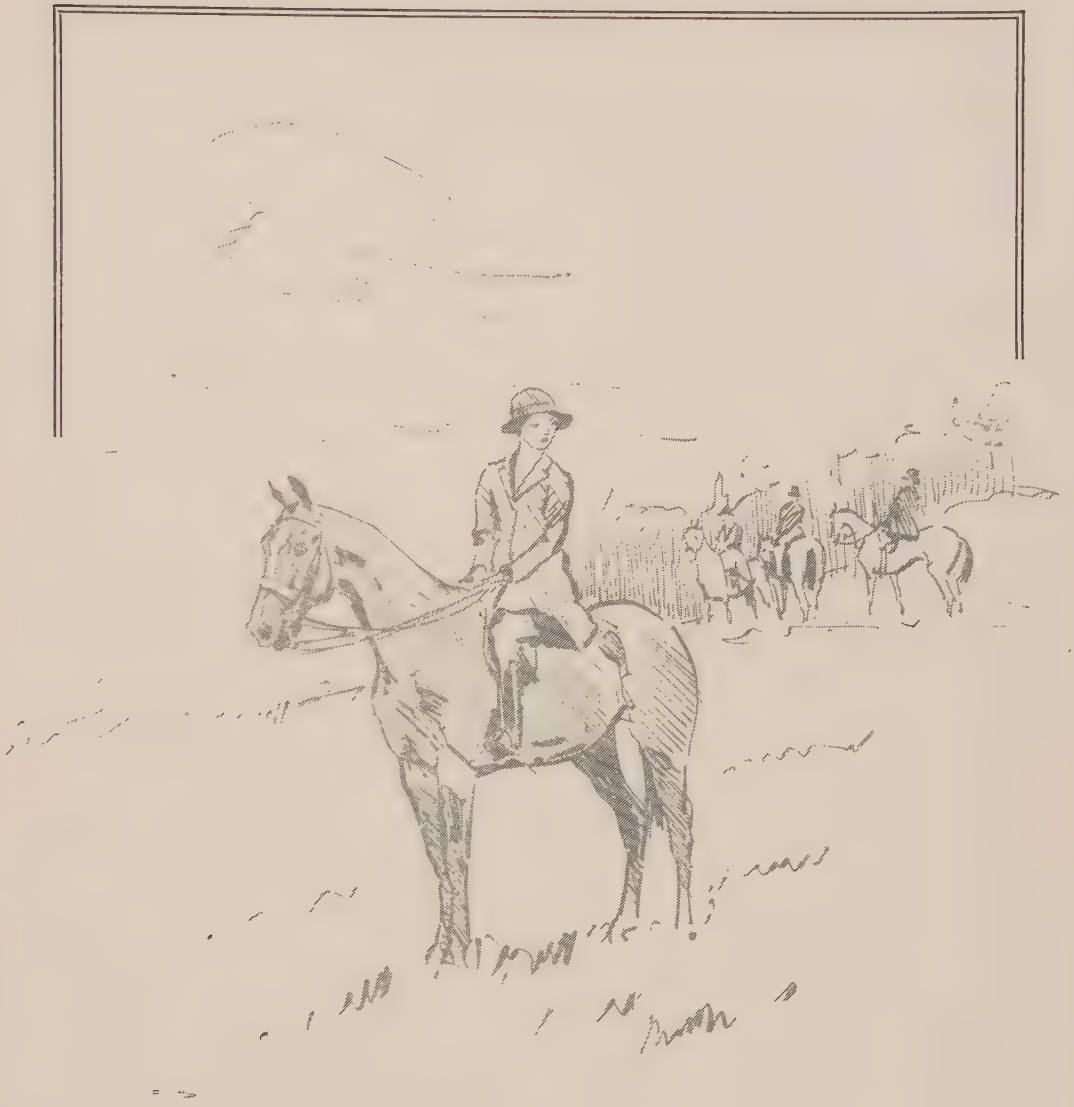
When estimating the time necessary to break certain horses there are many considerations, and it will pay to give them all unprejudiced thought, not only singly but each in conjunction with the other, and also comprehensively as a whole. I do not exaggerate when I say that it is necessary to spend more time in thought and in the attempt to fathom each horse's mentality than actually on his back.

The points for consideration, and their solutions, are not as self evident as they may seem at first sight.

In this connection I hope I may be pardoned if I speak of those very great experts, the trainers of racehorses. Hitherto I have left them out of consideration, because they are professionals of great experience and I am only an amateur with no experience of racing at all.

The date of a race for which a horse is being prepared is for the trainer a very limiting and hampering condition. A man, who has gone grey in the profession, once told me that with 75 per cent. of his horses the date of the race is always about a week wrong, that either his horses have begun to go off or that they have not quite reached their best. Then, in addition, as he has the owner to satisfy, he must often have to stretch a point rather than confess that he has not quite hit it off, and that his candidate is not at its best.

This is as far as I intend to go in speaking of the racehorse, and I have only gone to this length in order to point out that the schooler of the hunter or the polo pony has not the limitation of a definite date imposed upon him, in fact, he is wisest who starts without even an approximate date in his mind. He will thereby have fewer failures. Great experience will, how-



An untried polo pony will benefit by half a season's hunting with a light weight

ever, enable a man not only to decide on the course he will adopt with any given horse, but will enable him also to form a rough estimate of the probable duration of the course.

As stated before, the subject must be approached from different angles. There is in the first place, the total time from the handling of the three- or four-year-old until his creditable appearance in a run with hounds or in a game of polo. There is, in the second place, the duration of each lesson.

I cannot find that the total time varies between the hunter and the polo pony. Assuming that the education of both begins as the horse approaches his fourth year, the ideal age, they will, on the average, begin to be reliable hunters or polo ponies suitable for the average rider in their fifth year, and reach the height of their powers in their seventh. Then with luck, they should remain at the height of their power for another five or six years, a polo pony probably longer.

It must be remembered that I am only generalising, and exceptional cases of early maturity, no less than examples of very slow progress may come within the experiences of my readers. Then, again, there may be instances of horses and ponies retaining their brilliance to a far greater age than twelve or thirteen, but broadly speaking, my figures can be taken as a reliable guide.

A further consideration in this connection is, how quickly can we proceed at first; are we wise to press forward education at the early stages and to ease off as the animal matures; or should we begin gradually, intensifying instruction later? Here our best guide is a comparison with man.

A man is mature at twenty-one, a horse at seven. In both instances dentition is complete at these respective ages, and both can be said to have become adult. It is therefore a good

guide to multiply the age of a horse by three to arrive at the corresponding age of a man.

In deciding how we should proceed with a horse's education we must consider the physical condition of our pupil in exactly the same way as we should that of a boy. Many boys nearing their twelfth year will be in a school class or playing games with others of a much higher age. It may well be that the boy is selected to play in a football team composed of the oldest boys of the school, and in physique and size he may be well up to their standard. In these circumstances it would be absurd for him to be playing with his contemporaries or to keep him in a class less developed mentally. And so it is with the horse. His early life may be such that he is very mature by the time he is three years old, which means that his education can not only begin earlier, but can be pushed further forward than that of a three-year-old that has spent his early youth in less favourable circumstances.

A good example in this connection is the racehorse; he is corn fed from his earliest youth and races when he is two and a half years old.

Another example is the polo-bred polo pony. Here the predominant factor is generally the show ring instead of racing. No exhibitor would stand a chance in the show ring in the yearling, two-year or three-year-old classes unless he has artificially fed and handled his youngsters, while as four-year-olds, as early in the year as March, they are tested in the saddle as severely as older played ponies.

Most chance bred ponies bought from farmers, both here and in Ireland, are not as advanced either in their physical or mental condition at five years as these carefully nurtured children of luxury are at three. Greater care must be taken

with immature five-year-olds than with the more advanced ponies of three or rising four year old. This extra care must take the form of physical training as apart from schooling. All this must be gently progressive, so that fights are avoided, and even at exercise care must be taken to prevent the pupil adopting a slovenly carriage of the head and neck or the result will be splints, spavins and curbs. It may even be impossible to restore the balance lost by an incorrect flexion.

Breaking means not only establishing a means of communication between horse and rider, but has also, for another and hardly even secondary object, the physical training to enable it to carry out its rider's wishes without undue fatigue and without injury. These two objects must be achieved simultaneously. But this does not mean that both will be attained by the same set of exercises ; on the contrary, they must be entirely different.

Establishing a means of communication is like teaching a language. Every movement of the rider's hand and leg must come in time to have a definite meaning, so in the course of instruction it will be useless to do anything with hand and leg that is not understandable. Indeed, it will be worse than useless, for it will be mere nonsense with no object and no meaning, so that confusion will be the only result.

To obtain the necessary *physical* condition a set *of exercises* is called for, quite different from those on the educational side. If we try to mix the two failure is certain, not necessarily complete failure, but, in the best circumstances, such delay as to make breaking unremunerative, and in the worst case a soured, vicious and useless animal.

Let us consider these points with an analogy before us more obvious and more universally understood. The army

recruit has to be trained to handle his weapons and to move with precision, and later to march long distances carrying heavy marching order.

There have been in the army within my recollection various systems of physical training amended from time to time, some of them abandoned and others substituted, but never has it been advocated that rifle practice, sword exercise or route marching are the best preliminary preparation for endurance.

Scientifically thought-out systems of physical training have been devised to give the recruit the necessary poise and muscular development, to give him activity, balance, and strength to enable him to take his place in the ranks creditably, and to march long distances with kit and accoutrements and to handle his weapons with ease and smooth precision.

I have discussed the matter with a trainer of one of our leading football teams, and here again the routine of training is something quite different from playing football, and consists partly of exercises calculated to develop quickness and agility individually, something quite apart from playing practice and all directed towards attaining physical fitness.

So I am following accepted theory when I separate lessons from physical training until such time as physical wellbeing is so far established and education so far advanced that they can run concurrently. The horse will then be in the requisite mental and physical state to go hunting or into a game of polo.

It should also be remembered in this analogy: with the human being we have a pupil anxious to excel with much understanding, with the horse a pupil with a great love of ease, impatient of control, very slow of perception, and with whom it is difficult to establish communication.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to postpone instruction entirely until the horse is fit, for then his powers of resistance would be greatly increased. There are plenty of early lessons we can give to help to establish this communication and which will convince him of our mastery, without taxing his strength or understanding, and without running the risk of injury to his limbs, joints, and above all to the bars of his mouth. If, as said before, education does not begin until he is mature or in hard condition he will be more muscular and "full of himself," bit indications will have to be more marked, and there is a distinct risk of impairing the sensitiveness of the bars of the mouth with all the pulling about to which we should be compelled to resort.

This is where the necessity for thought comes in. There will be certain obvious signs that we are going too fast, such as the following. Filled legs are probably an indication that food is in excess of what is warranted by work. Brushing shows that we are demanding exercises too difficult, having regard to his physical fitness. Bruised bars and sore lips call for a complete cessation from work, except exercise by leading or lounging in a cavesson with no bit in the mouth; and, finally, unreasonable resistance will show that we are proceeding too fast, faster than his powers of assimilation can stand.

These contretemps prolong breaking, and the way to avoid them is to appreciate that they occur through a mistaken idea that to lengthen a lesson shortens the period of breaking. Interruption to lessons through sore places and other injury, actual or threatened, is the most usual cause of a waste of time.

EXAMPLES

"F—— D——"

A grey pony mare, five years, 14.3½, quiet to ride. A low wither made her look thick through the shoulder, but she was a naturally balanced pony and surprisingly fast. She had a week of long reins, about a fortnight in the school, two days of stick and ball and went straight into fast polo. She was sold at the end of her first season, after an exhaustive trial, as a made pony. Her only fault (if it could be called a fault) was that she jumped into her stride with such energy that her rider, if not careful, was thrown back in the saddle, and was then liable to catch her in the mouth, which had a tendency to make her bound; but she was nevertheless the pleasantest, staunchest pony that I ever rode.

"D——"

A heavyweight mare, 14.3½, five years, just backed, a very fine galloper. The bend of her neck came a little too far back, but with the optimism of youth (thirty years ago) I made up my mind I could cure her. In the long reins, with the bearing rein, her carriage was of course perfect, but towards the end of a chucker she always came to be heavy in hand. She had a fortnight in the long reins and three weeks in the riding-school. She then threw out a splint and had to be rested six weeks. After this she had another week of long reins and a week in the school, by way of a refresher, followed by a fortnight's stick and ball and fast work in the open. She played polo (at her own pace) for a couple of months (but required a constant change of bit). After this she was tried in a match by a man who bought her. In the course of one chucker she had a collision with

another pony. Her rider hit out from behind, followed up at full gallop and crashed head on into the pony of an opponent who was trying to meet the ball. This did not affect her at all, and she never showed any fear. She played many years and then was used as a brood mare.

"S——"

A grey gelding, 15 hands, seven years, bought at the Army dispersal sales at Ormskirk. This pony took two years to school, but I will add that he suffered from a brain disease (megrims) which used to attack him when he resisted. His great pace and dash, perfect carriage and balance, encouraged me to persevere. He had a week in the long reins, a fortnight in the school, and from the very first took no notice of stick or ball, probably he had already been so far schooled. As this pony was bought in the autumn, and there was no chance of polo until the spring, we hacked him throughout the winter. It was during these rides that he would be seized with violent paroxysms, and I have often known him in the course of one of them, gallop sideways for half a mile along the road, resisting every effort to straighten him. It was a nerve-racking experience, but by the time polo began I had him well schooled. Nearly all this schooling took place on the grass at the side of the road, as I had no paddock available at the time. (I recommend this with ponies that do not take kindly to work in the paddock.) He learned to stop and start off again, and whenever I came to a place sufficiently wide I made him jump round. It took me two months of regular play to find a bit for him and the correct length of martingale. By the end of the season he was playing fairly well, but his impetuosity did not encourage me to let him right out. The following season, after a winter at

We hacked him throughout the winter

grass, he seemed more temperate, and before the end of his second season he was playing in matches and made a name for himself. He was one of the ponies selected to play in the International matches in 1924, but unfortunately he broke down and had to be fired. None of my friends thought I could break him, but they admitted that if I could he would reach top class.

"MISS BUCK"

Polo bred, 15 hands 1 inch, given to me unbroken as a three-year-old by the breeder. I got her in the autumn, and as she was so mature and had such wonderful limbs and straight action I proceeded at once with ordinary breaking. She developed amazing powers. She had a fortnight in long reins, three weeks in the school and three weeks fast work in the open, stick and ball occupying only about three half hours. Unfortunately wet weather prevented us from starting polo at the expected date and by the time we did begin the club was playing full speed. She was playing really good and fast polo at the end of July in her four-year-old year, and got a double first at the National Pony Society's Show in the following March. However, she was not schooled on lines to suit the judges, who did not make too good a fist of riding her, and she was only reserve for the championship. After carrying me for three seasons she was sold at Tattersall's. She was sound and unblemished and her legs were as clean as the day she was foaled.

Her new owner took her to America and lent her to the English team for both International matches in 1927, after which she was sold at auction for $7100 and then played for America in all *their* International matches.

Describing the goal which gave the United States the victory in the first of the International matches, against Argen-

tina, Mr. J. C. Cooley wrote in *Town and Country* (New York) : " In the seventh chuker Mr. Nelson scored at the south end, tying the score at six all, and the teams came out for the eighth chuker all even, and everybody on the stands under those grey and mournful skies was simply staggering with excitement. And then in the eighth came the end, and the United States won as hard a match as they have ever played, and to Mr. Harriman and his bay mare, Miss Buck, came a fame that will always be theirs in the history of polo. For the third time Miss Buck came out on the ground, and if she was a tired mare she never showed it. The eighth period started, and after a few tremendous minutes Mr. Stevenson, again riding Mr. Sanford's bay mare Shamrock, backed the ball in the centre of the field, not far from the boards on the west side and right in front of the clubhouse. No play could have been more dramatically staged. The ball was hit, and like a flash Mr. Harriman on Miss Buck wheeled inside Mr. Mills on the bay mare Aurora, and like a shot Miss Buck was on her way following the swallows down south. Like a swallow the bay mare went in her flight, and in that flight Aurora could not follow. Mr. Harriman hit the ball down the centre of the field, and racing away from interference he got to the ball again and scored the goal that again put the United States in the lead, with scant time left to go. In those last few minutes Argentina attacked with undaunted courage, and twice it seemed as if Mr. Kenny must score. But the tale stands that he didn't, and victory came to the United States with that utterly satisfactory goal of Mr. Harriman's, the last goal of the day. And so the story of the scoring ends, as it had begun, with the victorious effort of a most persistent and painstaking player, and the speed and courage of the bay mare."

"E——"

A thoroughbred brown mare, seven years old. She had been schooled by a young soldier, but had not been played. I never got her to change her hind legs when turning and I never got the correct direct flexion. As far as I could tell it was a *physical* impossibility for her to bend her neck at the poll. A spell of schooling nearly always ended in her jibbing, and to play her was a precarious affair because of her failure to change her legs. She had eight weeks schooling, sometimes in the long reins, sometimes in the school and sometimes in the open. She was one of the few ponies with which I was not able to follow my usual course of breaking, because I never could make out at what stage she stuck. However, as she was sound, thoroughbred, and very good-looking, someone took a fancy to her and bought her at auction, but she gave him two falls through turning while galloping disunited. I do not know what became of her, but she would probably sell very well again because of her looks.

"C——"

A bay gelding, bred by myself, 15.1. We put him into breaking tackle at three years old and played him at four. He had a fortnight in the long reins, during which he was backed. He was hacked all winter and the following summer he played polo. I entrusted the early stick and ball lessons to a groom, who had been very successful with the preliminary handling. I have no idea what happened during this early stick work, or whether anything happened at all, but he never, all the years he played polo, ceased to regard the ball with suspicion. I could play him, but I could never give a show with stick and ball outside the game. He was a very perfectly shaped pony

and all his school work came to him easily. A fortnight sufficed, and another fortnight at fast work made him completely handy. He was probably the fastest pony I ever owned, but in his second season I foolishly lent him for a match and he got the bars of his mouth cut. I rested him for six months, but he was never quite the same pony after. I played him several seasons, but he was only true on the ball at full speed.

"D——"

The mother of the above, 14.3, twenty-six years old at the time of writing and still playing polo. She was too old for remounts to buy at the beginning of the war, which she spent in idleness and in having C——, her only foal. How long she would have taken to break with my present experience, I do not know, but it took me two years before I got her into a game. She is a small pony, according to present ideas, staunch enough unless she comes up against a big opponent, in which case she refuses to engage in a riding off bout. However, she is so handy that this is not disturbing. She is the worst possible hack, because she will not pass any cottage where there is washing hanging out, and, further, she has a good look at every cottage she approaches to see if there *is* any washing. She always played better at home than away, as unfamiliar surroundings seem to take up her attention. She is a French thoroughbred and I got her at seven years old. She had a tendency to star-gaze. She went through my usual course, but it is difficult to say how long I spent at each stage, because she always had to be put back and retaught some early exercise. Her tendency to star gaze gave me the most trouble. It took her months to get used to the white ball, and if I could have sold her as a hack I should have done so, but motor traffic was new, and horses were wanted

that were quiet on the road and she was certainly not one of them. However, my perseverance was rewarded, as eventually she played two or three chuckers three times a week and never missed a game through unsoundness, and she lived eight miles from the ground. Her legs are perfectly clean. Her rest during the war no doubt prolonged her working life, and her maternal experience calmed her down considerably.

"M——"

A brown mare, a weight-carrying pony, just backed, and no more, the winner of many prizes in the show ring. Her sides were too sensitive to leg pressure, and she was very difficult to break in consequence. It is still very difficult to ride her without her switching her tail, even if one sits as loosely as possible. The man I bought her from had broken her for Dublin Show in a fortnight, and with a view to saving time and with the idea of getting her to answer to the leg quickly, he used very sharp spurs which I think accounts for her over-sensitiveness. To anyone accustomed to using his legs and heels she is a difficult animal to ride, but to anyone who can manage without leg pressure she puts up a better show. Her polo education is not yet complete, but she promises well if I could only get her out of the way of flying from the leg in such an exaggerated way. In the game she reminds me very much of S——. I do not know, even after a season's play, whether I have found the correct bit for her or the correct length of martingale.

"M——"

A bay mare, 15 hands, six years, broken to ride and drive. This was a typical case of mismanagement; although her

Out hunting she galloped along with her eyes glued on hounds

schooling for polo seemed to proceed on quite normal lines. She carried herself perfectly, was balanced and took to stick and ball without any trouble, but she was apt to become unmanageable at the end of a lesson. I was anxious to give her a rest and start afresh, and if I could have got a ride out of her without a battle I should have done so. Even on the road she was nappy and would try to turn up every lane towards home. A friend to whom I described her asked me to lend her for the winter because she felt sure she could cure her. The following spring she wrote to me that she had a good offer for her from a polo player, which I accepted. I was curious to know how she effected a cure, and it proved to be nothing more complicated than a complete rest, during which her mouth regained its freshness and an insignificant sore on her side got well.

"M—— D——"

A thoroughbred chestnut mare, 15.3, five years. Through lack of extreme speed she had had an unsuccessful racing career. As she was a very placid animal, indeed almost lethargic, she was not easy to school, and propulsion had to come from the rider's legs. In her fast paces she lowered and stretched out her head and took a tremendous hold of the bit. Out hunting she galloped along with her eyes glued on hounds, and because of the difficulty of raising her head and obtaining the direct flexion, it was often impossible to prevent her charging her fences. We had some narrow escapes of falling, but one day we took a toss through failing to rise at an open ditch and parted company. She got loose and galloped on after hounds. I saw her make for a gateway across which was a single strand of barbed wire, four feet high. She saw *that* all right and cleared it. But the next fence had *hidden* wire in the hedge

and she got hung up in it. Very sensibly she lay rock still till we cut the wire and disentangled her. She never became a safe hunter, her early training seemed to have been too deeply ingrained, and I think had altered her make and shape till it had become a physical impossibility for her to gallop with her head in a controllable position.

VII

ON GOING TO SCHOOL

" How is it done ? By doing it many times over
till it is done perfectly—" " for it is worth doing."
KIPLING

I CAN remember a picture in a comic paper, a tipsy reveller, whose wife is trying to drag him along by the arm, is saying : " No, Maria, I will do anything in reason, but I will not go home."

This seems to me symbolic of the attitude of many a beginner towards hunting and polo. He will buy good horses and ponies, equip himself with stable gear and with the most beautiful clothes, but he will *not* learn to ride. Nor will he study hunting lore or the tactics of the game, indeed he seldom takes the trouble to learn the rules.

It is the complacency of these youngsters that is so deplorable. If they would only realise their shortcomings, there would be more hope of a general improvement in horsemanship. The prevailing attitude of mind seems to fit that of the small boy who wrote from his preparatory school, " Dear Father, I am still bottom of the class, but I don't find the work at all difficult."

To attain the true fellowship of the horse a man must not be content to make himself just a rider, he must in addition aspire to be a horse-breaker. I maintain, however, that the terms are synonymous. The horse's education, like our own, is never at an end and a controlling influence is always necessary. " Horse-breaking " (not a pleasant term I admit) is the art of supplying this controlling influence, and therefore only means teaching a

horse obedience and keeping him obedient, which is, after all, just " riding." Although this is only a beginning it is well to consider the best way to go about it. The riding-school is the quickest and most efficient medium both for teaching the rider and for the early breaking and schooling of the saddle horse.

The consideration of the former is easily disposed of, and as there is no fear of riding lessons in the school being unduly prolonged, I have no warning to give on this score.

Unfortunately the tendency is all the other way, the pupil's desire to get into the open, out hunting, or on to the polo ground, being usually responsible for curtailment of a school course.

There are now happily plenty of civilian schools, but there is always difficulty in persuading young pepole to avail themselves of them to the full. Yet there is no surer and quicker way of learning correct and scientific equitation.

I know it is usual when this point is raised, to instance fine steeplechase riders and brilliant men to hounds, and to point out that they have never in their lives been in a riding-school or read a book on the subject. There are three answers to this : Firstly, the strength, courage and determination of these riders in their youth are responsible for their performances and reputations. Real skill, resource and finesse only come with maturity, and probably after unnecessary falls and many financial losses on horses that have proved failures. A riding course and a study of the subject by these riders when young would have produced this skill earlier in life, possibly, it may be argued, at the expense of some of their dash, but with the result that they would produce better mannered, sounder horses, and that they would therefore enjoy greater comfort and safety. It is little short of a calamity for a youngster to ride a few Point-to-Point

winners early in his career. The adulation of his friends (especially those who have won money on his mounts) leaves him under the impression that he " knows it all," and to suggest to him that he should go to a school and learn equitation is to ask for a rude retort. He would pull his stirrups up *twenty or thirty holes*, if they were there, even to go hunting, or to play polo, so that he adopts an attitude which prevents the use of the most important of the aids, his legs, and he is reduced to riding by the bridle. Can one wonder that the attainment of expert horsemanship is delayed ?

Secondly, his hunters and polo ponies would command higher prices when they come to be sold, for no matter how good a man's reputation for hard riding may be, if he does not appear comfortable and safe on his horses and ponies it is noted, and they will never be valuable animals.

Thirdly, a rider who has been taught the correct and scientific use of the aids is in a better position to overcome the resistance of a refractory horse, than one who relies on force and haphazard methods, and consequently his nerve is less likely to go.

In this connection I would point out that in England, expert horsemanship seems only to come with maturity. Our polo players seldom reach the higher handicap figures and our cross-country riders are not at their best till they are over thirty. I should say that the average age of our best riders is higher than in any other country.

Here it will not be out of place if I again dwell on a point to which it is impossible to attach too much importance.

Riding lessons under a competent instructor will teach a man that he must use his legs as instinctively as he uses his hands. There is no doubt that it is natural instinct and

The riding-school is the quickest and most efficient medium

common usage to rely too much on the hands and to neglect the use of the legs—especially when taken by surprise in moments of emergency or danger. The great art of bringing the legs into play simultaneously with the hands has to be learnt and practised until a new instinct is formed. A straightforward ride in the open may only furnish two or three opportunities for this practice, whereas in the course of an hour's ride in a school, leg and hand must work in unison all the time. Every one of the four corners makes it necessary, every change of direction and of pace. Without this co-ordination there is no riding in the true sense of the word. I deal with this subject further in a chapter on the spur.

It is generally agreed that riding is partly an art and partly a science: the art must to a certain extent be inherent and to a certain extent the outcome of science, but the science itself must be studied. Books will help, but a course of instruction in a riding-school under a competent teacher is the only sure way, unless half a lifetime is to be wasted in finding out and applying theoretical principles.

My advice, therefore, to anyone wishing to learn to ride, or to improve his riding, is to put himself under a capable instructor, preferably a skilful and elegant horseman, certainly one who knows the theory of horsemanship and is capable of imparting his knowledge in a lucid and interesting way. A groom will be useless unless the student wants to ride like a groom.

The second use of a school is for the education of the horse. In this connection I couple the manège and the riding-school, as they both serve the same purpose. They should both be the same size, 100 feet by 40 feet.

As it is found to be easier to gain and retain a horse's attention in a school than in a manège, a lesson in the former place

should be shorter, although if the walls of the latter are sufficiently high, and are so built as to prevent a horse from seeing over or through, there is little difference in the efficacy of the two. So when I speak of a riding-school I include the manège, but it is necessary to bear in mind these two points : the quieter the school, and the less there is to distract a horse's attention, the more intense is the impression, and the shorter should be the lesson. If a rider is used to a manège bounded by sheep hurdles (the best most of us can rise to) he must be careful to avoid prolonging unduly the lessons in a school, should he be so fortunate as to find one at his disposal. Similarly, a rider must not be disappointed if he fails to make progress in a manège as rapidly as he would in a school. I mention this with what may appear to be undue emphasis, because there is nothing that so retards schooling as prolonging a lesson beyond the point where a horse has learnt it.

To use such a school to the best advantage it is necessary to be quite clear as to its uses and to devise means to avoid misuses. The chief uses of the school are the help a rider gets from the walls, and their mental and moral effect on the horse. The long sides help him to keep the horse moving in a straight line, and leg application can be lighter in consequence. The corners force a horse not only to turn but also to gather himself together preparatory to turning ; this gives balance and poise, with a corresponding lightening of the rein and leg indications. The wall facing a horse will make him stop to avoid running into it, again lightening both rein and leg indications. But in all this there is something so useful and at the same time so subtle that it is by no means easy to explain.

I have spoken of horse-breaking and equitation generally, as a language. The rider's means of communication are the

bit, spur, whip, voice, and later, as perception gets keener, the leg, bit and rein only ; all have definite messages. But the wall of the school is the dictionary which helps to translate and to make the rider's indications intelligible. Without the help of the wall the application of bit and spur must be more marked, and the whole course as well as each lesson, more prolonged. It is, or should be, the main object of the rider to make all indications as light as possible, indeed a good rider on a well-trained horse should have complete control without any effort being visible to the onlooker. The saying " ars est celare artem " is truer of riding than of any other art.

To illustrate the use of the school, here are some examples that will furnish useful data from which to work out others.

We have to cure a horse of that detestable habit of getting hold of the bit when asked to stop. This is what polo players call " running on." With the hunter it often happens when the rider takes hold to stop his horse in order to take his turn at a gate or at a gap. He does not want to use a more severe bit, but he wants to teach him to obey a pull at the reins without exaggerated force.

The horse should be taken into the school, ridden diagonally into one of the corners, first at the walk, then at the trot, and finally at the canter. He cannot get past the walls and *has* to stop. If the rider will feel the reins (and if he likes to call " Whoa " in addition), just as the horse is gathering himself for the stop, he will, by association of ideas, come to interpret the touch of the bit as an indication to stop. In other words, the walls of the school have helped the rider to convey his meaning without hurting the bars of his horse's mouth.

To make my meaning still clearer let us ask ourselves this fundamental question. Why does a horse stop when, by pulling

the reins, pressure is exerted through the bit on the bars of his mouth? It is not as if he were held like a dog chained to a wall, because the rider, who holds the reins, is borne along on his back, and the pull can therefore only be an indication and not a physical restraining force. To make this indication effective the horse has to be taught that a pull on the reins means that a slower pace is desired. What better way can there be to show him that pressure on the bit has the same meaning as the wall beyond which he can under no circumstances go? To his limited reasoning powers the bit will come to seem as impassable as the wall.

Another instance is the rein back. It is imperative that the horse should rein back in a straight line, that is, without swinging his hind quarters to one side or the other. Now if we use the leg or spur to keep him straight it may excite the horse; he may misinterpret the indication and think that it is the signal to jump forward, as he should always be made to do after a few paces of the rein back. Now, a horse has always a weak side, one side to which he will answer more readily (this is not necessarily the same side when moving forwards as when backing), so that if we place the opposite side against the long wall of the school he will not be able to swing his quarters to this, his accustomed side, and will move back in a straight line and without the risk of being confused by leg application.

The school is often effective for curing a polo pony of the habit of bounding. I take it that it is within the experience of most polo players that they have had light mouth ponies that bound when pulled up suddenly. Every kind of bit, severe and light, is tried in vain. We must then realise that the pony's mind must be reached by some other means than the bit. Here the wall of the school will not only help to make him adopt

the correct position for stopping but he will *have* to stop, and as there is nothing to hurt his mouth there will be no inclination to bound and the habit will be eradicated.

The main problems that the rider has to solve in schooling are, firstly, how to gain the horse's attention ; secondly, how to overcome his resistance to control ; thirdly, how to convey his wishes to the pupil ; and, fourthly, how to make a sufficiently marked impression to avoid waste of time. To surmount these difficulties, as said before, we use a school, but while using the school educationally we should always try to emphasise the lessons by practical application to work outside.

To attempt to use a riding-school for any other purpose than for teaching is a mistake. The human pupil will be bored, and with the horse there will be a tendency to restrict free forward movement and to shorten the stride. We should teach a horse an exercise in the school and put it into practice in the open. Thus, having taught him to move forward on leg pressure and to passage, we can ride him past objects on the road at which he has been accustomed to shy. When a horse learns to obey the leg and rein back, it will be useful to demonstrate that this enables him to co-operate in opening a gate, and it will further help to bring it home to him if the gate leads towards home. If we show a prospective hunter how to get to the other side of a small obstacle in the school, he should then be put to jump a natural fence in the open.

Another instance ; when we have taught a polo pony to stop and turn on his hocks, we should take him into the paddock and show him that this is the proper way to turn after hitting a back-hander. Again, after a successful lesson in changing feet at the canter, it will help to bring the lessons home if we show him that this is the correct way to turn to get square with

a fence, and the safe and easy way for a pony to follow a jinking ball.

A school should always be available to correct faults. Out riding we are not always such complete masters of the situation as to be able to fight matters out. Slippery roads and crowded traffic have increased our difficulty. But the thought that we have a school at hand enables us, when prudence demands, to temporise with a refractory horse. Later in the school we can apply correction when within four walls we have him more at our command, or rather, when we are not so much at his mercy.

If a horse shows reluctance to remain on the grass verge on one or the other side of the road he should be taken into the school and put through a short recapitulation of leg work.

If we find a hunter is getting into refusing habits again the school will help us to re-emphasise the necessity for obedience to the aids, beginning with the turn on the fore hand, through a correctly executed passage, and finishing with an easy jump over a pole. If a polo pony gets heavy in hand, and fails to stop on his hocks, the walls of the school always facing him, will convey the necessity of his keeping his hocks under him so as to be ready to pull up and to turn. This, as already shown, will tend to lessen the pull on the reins and thereby relieve the bars of the mouth from undue pressure, so that the pony's mouth becomes lighter and lighter, his mind having been trained to interpret the bridle indications.

There are various forms of schools in use with the idea of improving a hunter's jumping. They should be used with great caution. It is unwise to use one at all with an impetuous horse as there is a tendency to make such a horse hot and impatient.

In most hunting countries to-day it is so often necessary to wait one's turn, and observation tells me that horses that have been chivvied round and round these schools are impatient when they have to wait their turn at a fence out hunting. So this may be another misuse of the school.

The riding-school is an instrument of great severity, and it must be the rider's aim never to abuse it, or the result will certainly be a struggle unnecessarily vehement and prolonged. A pupil may easily become so fatigued and disheartened that he reaches a state of sullen defiance, a frame of mind in which he is incapable of assimilating anything.

So it will happen that many a time a rider will feel obliged to pull up after a lesson of only five minutes, if there has been a definite indication that the horse has understood ; it is then necessary to convey to him that he has done what was required by making much of him, dismounting and leading him back to the stable.

Suppose we did not adopt this course, but instead went on repeating the exercise over and over again with the mistaken idea of impressing it upon his mind ; he will wonder what it is we really do want, and he will never know that he has given satisfaction ; in future there will be no incentive to obey unless obedience has been immediately followed by reward. Further, the reward must follow obedience without a second's delay, while on the other hand the aid to correct a rebellious movement must be applied in definite and direct opposition to counter this movement. If there is any pause, there is no way of conveying to the horse that reward is for a general compliance or that punishment is for a past misdeed.

A lesson should never stop unless a horse has given in, but it must stop as soon as he has. This often presents another

Slippery roads and crowded traffic have increased our difficulty

problem, but intelligence and thought will solve it. A rider finds himself with half-an-hour to spare, and a horse to school. We will say that he has got to the stage where the horse has to be taught the rein back. The rider finds that his pupil resists, and he therefore dismounts to give him the preliminary lesson on foot. The resistance is overcome, and the next thing to decide is whether to be content with this or whether to try to obtain the rein back mounted.

Experience is the sole guide, coupled with a correct appreciation of the rider's capabilities and the horse's temperament, but it is wise to be content with little, rather than to risk regret through being too persistent.

It is impossible to determine the duration of a lesson beforehand. If we feel that the lesson has been learnt, we must be content to waste the remainder of the half-hour rather than to continue and thereby court the more serious rebellion that is so often the outcome of persistence. There is no surer way of spoiling a horse's temper than by pushing one's authority beyond this point ; in fact, he may become so exasperated that he fights and struggles blindly against leg and bit, and may even crash his way through the hurdles of the manège, or trap the rider's leg against the wall of the school, or definitely jib and refuse all movement.

On the other hand, the time available should, within reason, not be limited, because the resistance may be protracted ; here the tact of the rider must come to his rescue if the lesson has to stop with the task unfulfilled. The lesson may have to be cut short because of fatigue on the part of the horse or rider, evening may come and it may get too dark. Then it will become necessary to change the point at issue, abandon the particular lesson and substitute another, something easier, or,

at all events, one that we feel sure the horse will perform. This will give the opportunity to finish, dismount and make much of him, for in this way the lesson does not finish with successful resistance as the predominant impression, on the contrary the impression left on his mind is, that ease has followed compliance.

School work requires resource, knowledge, practice, patience, and self-control; resource, because ingenuity must devise a means of overcoming the resistance of an animal stronger and more persistent than ourselves, and one which easily becomes so discouraged that his resistance becomes blind and disorderly; knowledge of the correct sequence of exercises; patience to go on trying the same exercise over and over again if necessary; and self-control to avoid exasperation at a horse's apparently pointless resistance.

Above all, the rider must avoid working on haphazard lines. The exercises he practises in the school should be few, and must be designed to a definite end, and he should be able to render an exact account of all his actions and indications.

Given a school correctly used, it will be found that the time required to break a horse will be reduced in the aggregate, from months to weeks, and each lesson reduced from hours to minutes.

VIII

THE USE AND MISUSE OF BIT, WHIP AND SPUR

" A horse whereon the governor doth ride
Who newly in his seat, that it may know
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur."

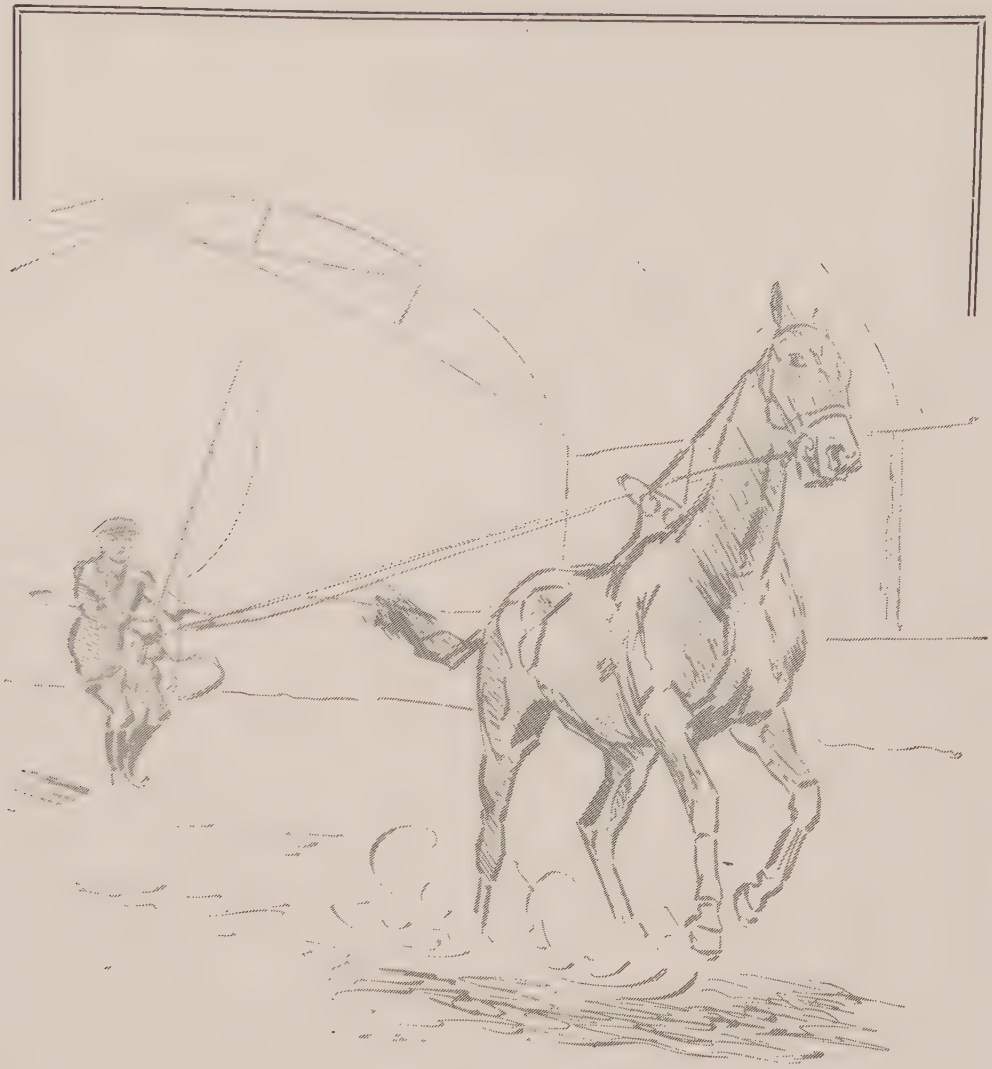
SHAKESPEARE

BOTH aspects of the fellowship of the horse are well typified by the title of this chapter, for no research more repays the horseman, and no greater cause for a misunderstanding exists than with a wrongly bitted horse or one in dread of an injudiciously used spur.

Even an unbroken horse will fly instinctively from a whip or the threat of one, but the bit and spur are means of communication which the horse has to *learn* to interpret. They must never be considered instruments of force. The rider uses them to convey an impression to the horse's mind, which in turn passes on the instruction thus conveyed, to his limbs. Because of the fear in which a horse holds the whip it should only be used educatively and as a reminder, but as the horse's response to it is instinctive, the resulting movements are reflex rather than the outcome of the training which spur and bit demand.

I write of the bit, whip and spur together for reasons which, if not immediately apparent, will become obvious in due course.

We can take the following as a rough guide to the progressive use of the aids. We pass from whip to heel, thence via dummy spurs to those with blunted rowels. After this the process is to a certain extent, and with possible omissions, reversed. We should, as a matter of fact, be able to return, especially with a well-bred horse, straight to leg pressure, with



Even an unbroken horse will fly instinctively from a whip

the whip ever present to be used on occasions as a reminder until mobility of the hind part is attained.

As it is impossible to predict what effect a bit will have, it is impossible to theorise or to give definite advice on the choice of one. Not so difficult is it to decide that a certain bit does not suit a horse, but only a trial will enable us to select one that will. To be successful in this direction one must not hesitate to try and improve a horse's going by making *some* change—however insignificant it may appear. How often am I asked in what bit a horse should go ! My answer is always the same. After asking in what bit he has been tried I then suggest that a substitute should be tried.

The study of the mechanism of various bits, their action and fit, amply repays the man who aims at comfort for himself and his horse, but, because of the difficulty enunciated at the beginning of this chapter, while it is impossible to write very positively on the subject, it is nevertheless possible to enumerate a few maxims, a few " do's and don'ts."

One often hears it stated that there is a " key " to every mouth. This needs to be qualified. There *is* a bit which is the most suitable for any given mouth, *but which that bit is must be considered in relation to each individual rider.* There is no bit or other contrivance that will take the place of the step by step breaking which is absolutely essential with every horse.

It is possible, but by no means certain, that once having found the bit most comfortable to both mount and man, this will be the best in all circumstances.

When trying various bits a difficulty presents itself. The trial must be made at the particular job for which the horse is intended. We cannot, for instance, be sure of finding out when hacking, the correct bit for a horse out hunting, or of discover-

ing, at practice, one suitable for a pony in a game. Again, we might conceivably have to ride a horse in a different bit for a Point-to-Point from that in which we should for a hunt. A pony might go kindly in a slow club game in a certain bit and get quite out of hand towards the end of a fast chucker in a match. This often makes the selection of the correct bit a lengthy business; it may well take half a season.

Then there is the educative value of a bit to be considered. During a horse's education (and who shall say when it stops) a particular bit may be necessary for a few lessons, to bring home and to emphasise a certain point. For instance, it may be advantageous to put a snaffle on to a hunter that has been made " sticky " at his fences through being inexpertly ridden in a double bridle. The object of this would be to restore his confidence and help to make him forget the more serious interference with his mouth at the critical moment of taking off. A horse might have to be hunted a few times in a severe bridle to get him out of the way of rushing his fences. A polo pony often has to be played for a time in something that will bring him back on to his hocks to stop him after he has contracted the habit of " running on."

The further consideration of bitting depends on two other things. Not only must the horse be correctly broken, *i.e.* taught the direct flexion and obedience to the aids, but the rider also must have been taught to use hand and leg correctly.

To get the best result a bit must fit the horse. It must be the correct width between the cheeks, neither too wide nor too narrow, and the length of the cheek above the mouth should be such that when the mouth of the bit rests on the bars, the curb chain lies in the chin groove. This will necessitate several sizes of bit if the stud is large, or if it is a constantly changing one.

The following points are worth considering in selecting a bit. Never put two bits into a horse's mouth if he carries himself and goes pleasantly with one. I am aware that this is a plea for the snaffle or one of the varieties of Pelham bit, and I am also aware that this will meet with the disapprobation of many hunting men. Nevertheless, I give the advice deliberately as the result of a wide experience and exhaustive experiments carefully recorded.

Bits may be roughly sub-divided and graded as follows :

Mild :	Half-moon snaffle Plain-jointed snaffle Twisted ,, ,, Ported snaffle	The thicker they are in the mouth the milder.
More severe :	Snaffle-mouth Pelham Sefton ,, Half-moon ,, Straight-bar ,, Ported ,, Hanoverian ,,	The longer the cheek, the tighter the curb chain, and the higher the port the more severe the bit.

All bits which have an unbroken bar can have the mouth covered in vulcanite, which makes them less severe. A leather curb is less severe than a chain.

The mouths of Pelham bits can, moreover, be made fast or to slide on the cheek, and this again causes a variation in the effect, but here one cannot predict which will be the more and which the less severe, and also they can be smooth or rough.

In this list I have omitted the various forms of Weymouth (curb and snaffle combination) bridle. Their name is legion, and there are besides countless varieties without names.

It should be an invariable rule to ride a horse or a pony in

the mildest bit that gives us control. But here again there is a pitfall. An apparently mild bit that requires a strong pull is not so effective or indeed so humane, as one more severe that requires a light pull. It is the power of conveying an impression that must be considered—the effect on the mind. A sharp incisive word of command is easier for the trained soldier or even a recruit to obey with precision than either a bellow or a mild conversational tone of voice. This analogy is worth bearing in mind when considering this particular aspect of the selection of a suitable bit.

The firmer and more independent a man's seat the more severe can be the bit without the danger of destroying a horse's freedom of forward movement.

The evil effects of too severe a bit are :

Too much weight on the hind part. (Rearing.)
The destruction of free forward movement.
Stickiness in jumping.
Slowness in jumping off in a polo pony.
Shortening of the stride.

The evil effects of too mild a bit are :

Too much weight on the fore hand.
Hind legs left behind.
Loss of balance in preparing to jump.
Failure to stop on the hocks in a polo pony.
Fatigue for the rider, and eventually the loss of all finesse in handling a horse.
Gradual numbness of a horse's mouth.

From this it will be seen how immensely important it is to select the happy medium, the correct bit for both horse and rider.

The whip should be looked upon as far as possible as a subsidiary aid. A green horse is afraid of the whip from the beginning and will run away from it (in fact he has to be trained not to be afraid of it or of a sword, lance or polo stick). Whereas the spur is simply an irritation until the horse has been taught to interpret its meaning. With just a few horses the whip continues to be the more effective of the two. Why then, it may be asked, use a spur at all, why not rely entirely on a whip ? The reason is that a whip can only be used on one side, and raising it preparatory to hitting a horse, may be interpreted as a threat and cause him to swerve, and as one hand must be taken off the reins it will be seen that the rider is not in such a good position. If we approach the question from the standpoint of true horsemanship there is no doubt that we must at the earliest moment cease to use the whip and rely entirely on the leg and spur. Then and then only can a rider control both sides of a horse's mouth and at the same time control his hind part. This is essential for correct schooling. I have experienced many instances where the whip has appeared more effective than the spur in urging a horse forward, but with a well-bred horse or pony the mere presence of a whip in the rider's hand is enough. Later, of course, when the horse is broken, the reins can be held in the left hand, leaving the right hand free.

Convention governs the kinds of whip in general use. The variety latterly known as the "crop" is generally seen out hunting, and nowadays fashion decrees that it shall be no longer than eighteen inches, and, as if this were not sufficiently inconvenient, it is encumbered with five or six feet of useless complicating thong, and then about six inches of curved buckhorn handle to risk the rider being pulled off his horse at an awkward gate.

To risk the rider being pulled off his horse at an awkward gate

The fashion for the short crop and long hooked handle has been introduced within my recollection; why, I have no idea. I think the length of the hunting-crop should be twenty-seven inches, and the thong, if a rider feels he cannot defy convention and do without one, should not be longer than forty-two inches. The buckhorn handle should not be longer than three inches over all, and it should have a four-pronged gate stop at the end. If my readers will try opening, shutting and holding open a gate with a whip of these dimensions I venture to predict they will never again be satisfied with anything else. As far as my enquiries have gone, huntsmen and whippers-in invariably prefer the long kind because of the greater ease with which they can manipulate a gate, especially from an impatient, restless horse.

A woman, side-saddle, should never use this kind of whip, either short or long. The variety unpleasantly known as the " cutting whip " is the only kind that should ever be seen with a side-saddle, and preferably it should be long enough to touch a horse just behind the girth on the off-side, when the right hand is still on the rein. It should have a three-inch buckhorn handle and a gate stop like the crop, and the first twenty-four inches should be stiff enough to open a gate and prevent it swinging shut, often no easy matter, especially in a wind.

To what extent can the spur and whip be applied effectively to induce a refusing horse to jump? The question is propounded because it is here that one sees both used so freely. Here again, if the horse has been systematically and progressively taught to move forward from the spur or on leg pressure, the rider will be in a better position to deal with the situation if he has both hands on the reins. To use a whip in this difficult circumstance demands skill or its application will be untimely, but given this skill it can sometimes be more effective.

A rider with short legs will find it impossible to use spurs effectively or to avoid using them unintentionally. Such riders will of course have to rely on a whip.

There is no part of horsemanship more universally misunderstood than the spur. It is almost safe to predict that if the question is asked, " What is the use of the spur in riding ? " the answer will be wrong, even from men and women of experience. As a matter of fact I have put the question over and over again and I have hardly ever got the correct reply.

The spur is used to assist the leg or heel in controlling and guiding the horse's hind part, and for no other purpose. It will be best to deal first with the main fallacy.

It is thought by many that a horse can be made to gallop faster by indiscriminate spurring, but all that can be done in this direction is to induce him, always in conjunction with the use of the hands and by correct timing, to get his hind legs further under him and thereby to balance himself and place himself into a better position for an effort. It is, therefore, imperative always to use the leg or spur in combination with the rein and bit, which have to raise the head and neck and thus complete the balance. The balance and action of the horse can thus be improved, and to this extent the pace increased. The correct timing of the spur or of leg pressure is not easily explained. The rider must *feel* when the hind legs are coming off the ground, and then by squeezing the legs or by applying the heel or spur, he will stimulate the horse to increase his stride and strike back with increased vigour.

The very morning I re-phrased the above lines I saw my daughter riding a hunter that she had been preparing for a local show. It had been schooled in a universal bit (ported Pelham with short elbow cheek), but knowing the average hunting man's

prejudice she was getting it used to a curb and snaffle. I was not at all satisfied with its way of going, so I advised her to put on spurs. There was an improvement, but the horse still galloped with too much weight on the fore hand. We again put on the army G.S. bit and the effect was magical, but I still thought some improvement could be made, so we substituted a vulcanite half-moon Pelham and got a further marked improvement.

Now this is not a peculiar instance, and I again stress the importance of minute changes in bits, curb chains, martingale and spur, separately and in combination.

To show how far the misconception of the use of the spur can go I quote from an article by a professed horseman, entitled, " Why Wear Spurs ? " The question itself was a curious one for a horseman to ask, and it was difficult to gather for whose benefit the article was written, as the points discussed were so elementary as to savour more of the comic papers than to be the result of observation and experience. The writer refers to the spur as " useful to hang on by," and talks of spur marks in the horse's " flanks." He speaks of the spur as the " emblem of horsemanship," " pride of the habitué," and " the envy of the aspiring rider." The writer went on to describe it as a special mark of " dignity and veneration, and the resort of the person who wishes to make himself important," and if they were made of gold, he says, no one could gaze upon them without reverence or admiration. For the civilian to wear them denotes experience and courage, although at the same time their use is an indication of a lack of co-operation between mount and man. He further described the spur as the " S.O.S. of the cavalry-man." He told us that the spur " is an apology for bad riding and bad schooling, an annoyance to the horse, the

admiration of children and housemaids, and for the swashbuckler to flaunt."

It is difficult to comment temperately, but as the question was asked one must assume it was asked in all seriousness, and as such misconceptions can exist it is important to dispel them.

A rider's boot is incomplete without spurs, and furthermore he may dread being considered too inexpert to avoid their use at inappropriate times. This is, I think, the reason why men of the Service like to wear them on foot, if they are entitled to do so, for does not their presence argue that they have acquired a great art ?

There is also apparent confusion between the *wearing* of the spur with the *use* of the spur. If the author I quote asks why should people wear spurs, and then goes on to describe their misuses and to say nothing about their uses, he is asking one question and answering another. Spurs are *worn* for ornament or as a badge or symbol, and are *used* because without them a horse or pony cannot be broken or schooled. This does not mean that it is always necessary to wear them on horseback, but without a spur, wherewith to emphasise and give meaning to leg pressure, schooling would be a protracted and wearisome business, if not impossible.

To say that the use of spurs is cruel is just one more refuge of the sentimental and unpractical, for *someone* has to use spurs at *some time* during a horse's education, or the response to leg and heel pressure is at the best only half-hearted and conditional. But to say that to wear them dismounted is swank, and that the use of them mounted serves no useful purpose and that a rider is better without them, is raising an element of doubt in the student's mind on a point about which there should be no doubt.

There is no use muddling along without spurs, and the part played by them is positive. Without their use the breaker's time and energy are wasted and quite often the education of the horse comes to a definite standstill.

The spur, the bit and the whip, by emphasising communication between rider and horse, should be looked upon as means of control and never as instruments of punishment. As a matter of fact we can *never* punish a horse. If there were means at our disposal of explaining to him that the pain we were inflicting was in retribution for some past misdeed it would be effective as punishment, but the intelligence of the horse is not sufficient to connect the two.

When this is fully realised the spur will never be used roughly, or in any way that inflicts unnecessary pain. In this respect it is just the same as the bit. It is brutal and no part of horsemanship to jerk a bit violently in a horse's mouth with the idea of emphasis or in a feeling of annoyance.

The bit is to assist the hand to convey certain wishes, viz. to raise the head, to decrease the pace, to guide and control the fore hand. The object of the spur is similar, viz. to assist the leg and heel to place the horse in a better position for exertion and to guide and control the hind part.

The whip serves a dual purpose also. It is at first more effective than the spur to induce forward movement, as it is a threat from which a horse will naturally defend himself by flight. The whip must therefore be used to prepare a horse to understand the meaning of the leg, heel or spur. If the spur is used without this early preparation the young unbroken horse will without any doubt treat it in exactly the same way as the sting of a fly ; he will swish his tail, kick at it, and if there is something handy against which to press or brush he

will try to rid himself of the annoyance in this way. So if a rider uses a spur on a horse before teaching him its meaning he will simply irritate him and make him restive. If he persists he may drive the animal mad and, indeed, permanently and adversely affect his manners and disposition, and it is important to bear in mind that a horse will move away from the whip, no matter to what limb or part of the body it is applied, whereas the spur is only effective in one spot—three-quarter way down his side and immediately behind the girth.

A rider can, if he likes, try the experiment of riding his horse without spurs, but this is what I describe as "muddling along." He will find that until it is trained he will have to kick it very hard in the ribs to get any response whatever, and that it will be quite impossible to obtain that accurate and prompt obedience so necessary if we wish to avoid that abomination, riding by the bridle alone. This hard kicking is undesirable for three reasons: the horse's sides will be bruised; further, he will gain an exaggerated idea of his power of resistance, and also it is tiring to the point of exhaustion to the rider. The hair on a horse is to a certain extent a protection to him, but at the same time I am convinced that it hides many a bruise that would otherwise show "black and blue." If after correct preparation with the whip the bare heel still fails to obtain a prompt response (as it will with ninety-nine horses out of a hundred) we should try the dummy spur, and it may be that we have to go still further and resort to a spur with blunted rowels.

No horseman would use a severe bit if he could obtain control with a mild one, and there is similarly no sense in using a rowelled spur after free and accurate obedience has been obtained with a dummy or with the bare heel or with mere leg pressure. If, however, a mild bit required such violent pressure

as to cut or bruise a horse's mouth, a rider would be inhuman not to resort to something more severe that requires only a light touch ; similarly, a rider should prefer to use a pair of spurs gently than to kick a horse violently in the ribs.

But really sharp spurs should never be used except by the most skilled exponents of the *haute écôle*, and then only in the confined space of a riding-school or manège. The rowels of new spurs as they come from the shops are too sharp for practical riding. They must have the points cut off with a pair of pliers, and further blunted by rubbing on a stone. It is also necessary to see that the rowels revolve freely, and to ensure this they should be drawn backwards and forwards on a piece of wood after cleaning, and again tested before they are buckled on.

Not only must the use of the spur be understood and its application correctly practised, but, above all things, the rider's seat and balance must be such that he can be certain of not using them unintentionally. There are, as said before, few items of horsemanship where greater want of knowledge is displayed than in the use of the spur, and it is seldom considered as scientifically as it deserves to be. I feel that tradition is to a certain extent responsible for much of the misconception. The spur used to be a symbol of nobility or knighthood ; to-day the modern sportsman, evidently under the impression that his costume is incomplete without them, will wear them as a decoration to a top-boot, regardless of the fact that unintentional and incorrect use will adversely affect the manners of his horse.

I remember on one occasion seeing a pony lent for a trial chucker to a hunting-man who was beginning polo. The owner asked him if he would mind removing his spurs as the

pony would not play temperately with them. There was quite a little argument, in which the beginner's wife joined, and in the end the trial took place without spurs; the pony was bought, but the new owner, thinking he knew best, ruined the pony in a week by disregarding the previous owner's advice.

Only temperate polo ponies can be ridden in the game with spurs, because here we have not complete control of our actions. In a riding-off bout one's legs are often dragged back and the heels forced against our pony's sides. Dummy spurs and spurs with rowels are of great assistance, in fact essential, in *schooling* a polo pony; but spurs with rowels are not allowed in the game, and, for the reason mentioned above, we should be circumspect in a game whether or not we wear even dummies.

A study of the evolution of the spur leads us to the following conclusions. *Firstly*, as the breed of the saddle horse has improved (viz. the more nearly a horse approaches the impetuous thoroughbred) the less is it necessary to use rowelled spurs, and the gentler can be their application if they are used. *Secondly*, the better the conformation of the horse, viz. the more suitable it is for carrying a saddle, the milder can be the bit, and again, the less severe the spur to control him. For instance, one can understand that a spur, the rowels of which had not had the initial sharpness removed, would require a bit of the utmost severity. *Thirdly*, the better the position in which the horse carries his head the more responsive is he to guidance by the bridle, and his balance is consequently so good that he will be found very responsive to guidance by leg indications. The heavy coarse horses ridden by our ancestors required bits of great severity and spurs like goads, and not instruments of communication, which I maintain both the bit and the spur should be to-day.

It certainly should be possible to hunt the modern saddle horse which has been well schooled in a snaffle, or that very humane double bit, the vulcanite half-moon Pelham, and with either dummy spurs or blunt, rowelled ones. His highly strung nervous organisation, well-knit frame and thin hide, and instinct for free forward movement, render a spur unnecessary as a goad, and necessary only as a means of control. The lightest application of the rein and leg should be enough to guide him.

The spurs I recommend are those with loop ends. They have the advantage that they can be adjusted to any boot with only one pair of straps, and there is nothing projecting at the sides. They are durable, as there is no hinged buckle to get out of order and no split ring to break.

Nothing would induce me to ride without spurs unless to play polo on a pony that might get excited if my spurs were forced against him when being ridden off. Horses go better with spurs, they always know when you have them on and when you haven't, even when you do not use them.

In conclusion let me put this question. Where does one see all the best mannered, most temperate and patient horses? And in case the answer is not apparent, here it is. In the army and mounted police, where rowelled spurs are compulsory.

The RESPONSIBILITIES *of* FELLOWSHIP

IX

SIDE-SADDLE AND THE FELLOWSHIP

"Women wear the breeches."

BURTON

THE proportion of women to men out hunting is increasing, and cross-saddle riding for women is not making the progress it should. It is, therefore, worth while considering what are the reasons for adopting the side-saddle in spite of the limitation set to true fellowship of the horse because of the incomplete contact, and consequently incomplete mutual understanding, that the side-saddle imposes.

Some years ago, when I first wrote on this subject grown women were just beginning to ride astride and the prejudice against it was great. To-day much of the *general* objection has worn off, but the prejudice has deepened and has become particular and concentrated in a way that is difficult to understand. Many of the leading shows have thought fit to ban it, in some cases entirely, while in others to classes confined to women competitors. I have never been present when these show conditions have been discussed, so I do not know what have been the objections raised, but I cannot imagine a more illogical attitude. We have given women the vote, we allow them to be cabinet ministers, to hold almost any official position, to become doctors, lawyers and policemen. Mixed bathing is universal or almost so, but we decree that women must not play lawn tennis without stockings, although they can dance on the stage barelegged, and that they must not ride astride. The first of these two prohibitions has nothing to do with the subject of this

chapter, although I should have thought that the present-day emancipated young woman would have something to say, very much to the point, on both subjects. To me it would seem just as logical to forbid short skirts, shingled hair and figures untrammelled by stays, the three greatest social revolutionary factors of modern days, before which even " votes for women " sinks into insignificance.

But to return to my subject, a consideration of the merits and demerits of the two styles of riding.

The objections to astride riding can only be based on one or a combination of the following considerations. Hygiene, safety, decency, looks (the aesthetic aspect), and last, but least, efficiency. Then there is still another point of view, possibly only a side issue: to what extent, if any, do fashion and convention, *i.e.* prejudice, influence the discussion ?

It is, as a matter of fact, a question of whether our womenfolk should *continue* to ride astride after they have stopped growing and are reaching maturity. I use the word " continue " deliberately, as it is the usual, if not the universal custom, for all girls to *begin* astride, and if they make the change to side-saddle, to do so at the time they would—a few years ago—have done up their hair and gone into long dresses. To-day they have no long hair to do up and their dresses remain short, so we can set down the age at seventeen or eighteen.

It is, as said before, a vexed question, and one that is usually discussed with much prejudice, often with heat and even rancour. There is a school of " die-hards " which maintains that astride riding is immodest. There is another, which we will call the aesthetic school, which declares that the side-saddle is more graceful and becoming. Some say that astride riding is safer, others maintain the reverse. Finally, there are

the most important questions of all : which method gives the rider the greater control, which method enables her to see more of a hunt, which is the more comfortable for the rider (to say nothing of the horse), and which is the more hygienic.

If for a woman to wear a man's clothes is immodest then astride riding is immodest ; but is it not really a question of convention and what we are used to ? Feminine attire, manners and customs have changed much of later years, and as we get used to these changes we learn to accept them, and we cease to notice or to comment. The writer remembers well, the outcry at the first woman to appear in his part of the world in an apron skirt, but who would now dream of describing this sensible, in fact indispensable, fashion as immodest ? The divided skirt or any other attempt to feminise the astride costume *is* objectionable, because it is trying to disguise the fact that the wearer is riding astride, and is a suggestion that she is too self-conscious to wear, without embarrassment, what has, up to now, been considered exclusively male attire. Any leaning to what may be called fancy costume in astride kit is also to be deprecated, and one has only to bear in mind the deplorable exhibitions in Rotten Row, or at a meet of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, to realise what has been called the " embodiment of everything incorrect."

There is a uniform for the side-saddle rider, and a woman gets her habit cut on stereotyped lines, either in blue, brown or grey, wears a soft felt hat and a coloured tie for hacking, a bowler or a tall hat and white stock for hunting, and there is, or should be, never a departure from this. The sooner the better, therefore, that a uniform for cross-saddle riding becomes " de rigueur," one combining good taste with comfort and a workmanlike appearance.

The side-saddle costume has a long tradition. The cross-saddle costume is of recent birth, but it is now settling down to a convention. Therefore, if a woman rides astride she should study the cut, fit and material of the clothes of some well-turned out men and women and decide what suits her particular make, shape, style and colouring, and obtain them from as good a tailor, bootmaker, and hatter as she can afford. Anything conspicuous in cut, colour, material and fit should be rigidly avoided. There are some women who have the happy knack of being able to instruct a country tailor how to cut and fit a habit; but it is a risk, and failure is an expensive matter, for it must be realised that riding kit, and certainly riding boots, are abiding possessions, and with care they last for years.

The fact that there are still so many absurd-looking astride riders is due to the absence of a conventional, established and accepted uniform, such as there is for the riding-habit, and the result is a greater scope for the display of bad taste.

Another point has a considerable bearing on the aesthetic view. There are some figures that are unsuited to an astride costume, and a woman whose figure and proportions do not lend themselves to male attire (especially dismounted) should ride side-saddle, if she sets any store on personal appearance; the riding-habit helps to conceal, or at all events does not accentuate, these disabilities, and unfavourable comment is avoided.

It is not difficult for a woman to look well on a horse astride, but it is very difficult for her to look well in astride kit dismounted. Women's figures, manner of standing, walking, and holding themselves do not harmonise with men's clothes. Even when they possess boyish figures and are perfectly turned out there is apt to be a distinctly musical comedy look about

Deplorable exhibitions in Rotten Row

them. But riding kit, whether side-saddle or astride, does not look well dismounted, so there is no difference in the two styles in this respect, or for that matter, between men and women on foot either.

Some years ago a letter commenting on the subject appeared in the press, and as it takes up a somewhat unusual standpoint, I give it *in extenso* to illustrate how diversified are the prejudices :

> " I am greatly interested in the controversy on cross-saddle and side-saddle riding for women in the hunting-field, and I am glad you did not discuss hacking in Hyde Park at any length, as the freaks there are better left unmentioned. I am at present suffering from the vagaries of my daughter of fifteen, who, with the independence of the modern generation, refuses flatly to recognise that she is approaching years of discretion, and the time has come when she should change over to the only decent manner of riding for a woman, viz. the side-saddle. I, personally, am not concerned as to whether these ladies who propose to adopt a man's seat on horseback can ' stick on ' or not ; most men cannot if their horse behaves in any unusual or unexpected way ; but I look on it from the point of view of the girl's matrimonial prospects. A quite plain girl in a bowler hat and a veil, given a good figure and an early acquired seat, good boots and habit, looks her very best on a side-saddle. Can you say the same of even the best lady riders who ride astride in clothes which are a compromise between a qualified idea of feminine modesty, and their brother's ' Rat-catcher ' ? No, first impressions count for a lot, and I do not propose to allow my daughter to handicap herself if I can help it."

I have dwelt at some length on this question of " get up " because I am convinced that it has an important bearing on the prejudice against the cross-saddle.

Let us now approach the subject from the point of view of safety. There is no reason why a woman should not ride as well astride as a man, but to be thrown is for her more serious, because she is not so used to falling and she is apt to hurt herself more. From experience as a teacher and from observation, I have no hesitation in saying that the astride riders are more easily unseated by a bucking or shying horse, or by a horse which over jumps or blunders. A firm cross-saddle seat is difficult to acquire, as there are weak and little used muscles (the adductors) which require to be developed. Now, in side-saddle riding, two very strong muscles (hip flexor and hip extensor) are the important ones. These are the chief muscles used in walking, and accordingly do not require developing. There is, therefore, no reason why, if the side-saddle rider does not lose her nerve, her seat should not be quite firm from the first day she rides.

There is, however, an important set off in the greater chance of a fall involving serious consequences. In a fall (and by this I mean a horse coming down), the side-saddle rider is always in a bad position as it is exceedingly difficult for her to get clear, because of the pommels and apron skirt, and she fares badly in consequence. The cross-saddle rider is generally thrown clear or, at least, can manage to extricate herself before the worst danger arises.

Commenting on this aspect, a games mistress of some experience writes :

> " I think that the hygienic and physiological side of the question is more important than is generally supposed. A girl under the age of eighteen should always begin by riding astride, but on reaching this age should change to side-saddle unless she has begun really early and has been riding regularly

from such an early age (eight years old or under), and so has had time to get a secure and comfortable seat. Under no consideration should an adolescent girl or child ride side-saddle, as until she has reached the adult age her bones have not become completely ossified. Strenuous exercises for a growing child in a continuously twisted or one-sided position, such as side-saddle riding entails, cannot but have harmful effects on the spine, such as lateral curvature which leads to distortion of the chest and so to ineffectual breathing with its attendant ills. I can see nothing in the conformation of a girl which should make her seat less secure than that of a boy, provided she begins young enough—*i.e.* well before the adolescent period when she is putting on more weight relatively than muscle—and rides regularly, so that she can achieve the necessary co-ordination and localisation of muscle work necessary to keep her balance without excessive grip upon a cross-saddle. Unless a boy also starts riding early he rarely becomes a good rider, so in this respect boys and girls start level, but a girl has the advantage in that she can, if she wishes, change to the side-saddle and lessen the chance of being thrown. As falls happen less frequently from a side-saddle this fact alone should influence the choice against astride riding for women, as they are always more liable than men to hurt themselves in falling—this fact is due largely to hereditary training. Another point in influencing women to ride side-saddle is the fact that they are then eliminating the danger of riding strain, an accident to which the muscles on the inner side of the thighs are liable. It is most important to run no risk of rupturing or straining the adductor muscles and those adjoining. In this connection it is well to bear in mind that riding strain is a self-inflicted injury due to a convulsive grip in excess of the strength of the muscle fibres, some of which may tear. It is an accident more common in riders whose gripping muscles are developed, and therefore more common with experienced riders than with beginners."

What does Whyte Melville say in his *Riding Recollections*, written in the days when all women who rode used the side-saddle :

> " It is frightful to think of a woman, landing in a pit, a water course, or even so deep a ditch as may cause the horse to roll over her when he falls. With her less muscular frame she is more easily injured than a man ; with her finer organisation she cannot sustain injury so well. It turns one sick to think of her dainty head between a horse's hind legs, or of those cruel pommels bruising her delicate ribs or bosom. It is at least twenty to one in our favour every time we fall, whereas with her the odds are all the other way, and it is almost twenty to one she must be hurt."

If the cross-saddle rider has begun young enough and has been well taught (the latter, I am sorry to say, a remote contingency) she will be safer than on a side-saddle, but then I ought to add that, unless she has had a variety of ponies and horses to ride to gain the necessary experience, she must confine herself to the one horse that she knows, and that suits her.

The side-saddle rider, on the contrary, because of her security (providing she has her own saddle), is firmer on an unfamiliar horse. But here is another pitfall, it is just *because* of this security that side-saddle riding lessons are so often entirely dispensed with. But they are nevertheless immensely important, and the side-saddle rider can never attain grace and elegance without expert tuition, and certainly efficient horsemanship is quite beyond her. And, arising out of this, she must have a side-saddle that fits her.

As regards control of the horse, there is no doubt that given a firm seat the astride rider is the only efficient one. No horse, unless it is perfectly broken, can be handled without a leg at each side correctly used. It is absolutely necessary,

therefore, that the horse of the side-saddle rider should occasionally be ridden by someone in a cross-saddle if it is to maintain its manners and its balance. The really good side-saddle horse is a great luxury and no trouble should be spared in its schooling, and the greatest care should also be taken in exercising so that its manners and mouth are preserved unimpaired.

One would think that the side-saddle rider's seat would be so secure and independent of the reins, that she would be less likely involuntarily to check her horse in taking off, or to interfere with it on landing, but for some reason this is not the case, and one must conclude that the same reason that has made a woman abandon astride riding for the side-saddle is responsible for this. Want of security has upset her nerve and induced that nervous clutch which in jumping is responsible for so much grief.

It is argued that the side-saddle riders see more of a difficult hunt, and that this is due to their extra security and confidence. Is there not another explanation to be sought here ? The older and more experienced women learned the art of riding across country on a side-saddle before the other kind of riding in the hunting-field was thought of. In a few years the girls now learning and gaining experience astride may have another tale to tell.

Then, again, observation shows that side-saddle riders are better mounted, more care is taken not only in the selection of their horses but in their schooling and exercising, and when they deteriorate, as they undoubtedly do, they are re-schooled or sold as failures.

As regards comfort to horse and rider everything is definitely in favour of the cross-saddle, just as everything is in favour of the cross-saddle for growing and immature girls.

She must have a side-saddle that fits her

The trot is unsuited to a woman on a side-saddle and equally to the horse so ridden. The discomfort to both of a long hack is great. It is only necessary to keep one's eyes open during a long ride between covers; the astride women look, and indeed are, so very much more comfortable, especially in that very trying pace the " hound jog." This pace is misery for the side-saddle rider and her mount also feels the strain, as can be seen by the twist in its action to counterbalance the one-sided weight and the pressure on one stirrup. It must also be borne in mind that a side-saddle, however well it fits, entails very much tighter girthing, so that the discomfort to the horse is increased. This, combined with the extra weight, makes a shorter day desirable from the horse's point of view, just as the tiring position of the rider does from hers.

The cross-saddle is obviously more convenient. It is easier to mount, easier to girth, a woman is not obliged to take her saddle about with her, she can change horses for a long hack home, and she will find more people willing to give her a mount, as the chance of sore back is minimised. In fact, the side-saddle is so heavy and has to be girthed so tightly that few women can saddle their own horse or even mount without help.

Expense is a point which I have not discussed so far, and it is incontrovertibly in favour of astride riding. The side-saddle rider has to pay more for her horse, her riding-habit costs about double, and the side-saddle about three times as much, and if it ceases to be comfortable, as often happens, it has no second-hand value.

Having so far argued the " pros " and " cons " let us draw conclusions, and above all things we must avoid being diacritical. I cannot declare that one style is more becoming than the other, because it is a matter of taste. I personally prefer astride for

all—old, young, stout or thin. It is entirely a matter of turn-out and a graceful seat, and in both cases a good tailor, bootmaker and hatter, combined with good taste, are necessary, no less than a course of lessons under a good teacher. To listen to the enemies of the cross-saddle one would imagine that all side-saddle riders were graceful swans, and their astride sisters ungainly geese. And are all men paragons of elegance and accomplished horsemen ?

We see, therefore, that astride riding is safer if the horse falls, cheaper, more convenient, and more comfortable. The side-saddle seat although firmer as long as the horse stands up is dangerous if he falls. But, on the other hand, there is some subtle attraction in the astride kit which has induced many a young woman to take up riding, and unaccountably the accepted uniform of the aside habit is dull and uninteresting in comparison.

It is unwise and unsafe for women to hunt in a cross-saddle unless they have faced the drudgery of riding-lessons, and unremitting practice. It is, however, just as necessary for the side-saddle rider to have riding-lessons, to acquire horsemanship, to sit straight, and thereby to avoid giving her horse a sore back every time she rides.

I have seen a cross-saddle beginner try to help matters at her fences by holding on to the cantle of the saddle with the right hand. All went well till one day she was seen hurtling through the air as her horse jumped. It seems she had, by mistake, caught hold of the seat of her breeches.

It is quite impossible for a woman in a side-saddle to break or school a young horse or to correct a refractory one, and this is no part of the side-saddle woman's job, it has to be done for her.

Hacking in a cross-saddle is not difficult, but the danger of

being unseated by a shy, a buck or a stumble, is always present. A really firm seat in a cross-saddle requires at least ten years of steady practice, and that from early youth,—and, by the way, this holds good for boys as well as girls. An independent seat under other circumstances is rarely acquired.

I have heard women say, "If I have to give up riding astride I shall give up hunting," but oftener, "If I have to *continue* to ride astride I shall *have* to give up hunting," but I think the latter were the more sincere.

In a hilly country a cross-seat is the only one to avoid giving the horse a sore back, but as there is usually no jumping, the danger is less.

A horse for a side-saddle should be up to at least three stone more than one for a cross-saddle, if the rider wishes for as long a day. There is not only the extra weight of the saddle and the extra tight girthing involved, but also the fact that the weight being badly distributed (too much to one side and too far back), calls for extra strength in the horse. Many horses hit themselves and brush carrying a side-saddle, although they would never do so in a cross-saddle.

The medical hygiene of astride riding is a matter on which I am not competent to express an opinion. We do know, however, that mature and married women can ride side-saddle with impunity often to a great age, but whether they can do so astride is a matter for the medical profession to decide. I doubt whether astride riding has been long enough in vogue for doctors to collect sufficient data to form a definite opinion, and time alone will show whether one style of riding is less or more harmful than the other.

And now, having drawn conclusions, is there advice that can be helpful ?

The one chance that women have of approaching efficiency on a side-saddle is invariably thrown away. They should use a cutting-whip, long enough to touch a horse just behind the girth on the off side, and preferably long enough to enable them to keep the right hand on the rein at the same time. This is the only possible way, although an imperfect one, to counter the leg on the near side. But fashion decrees that they shall use a hunting whip and thong, the crop too short to be of much use, and the thong, which anyway serves no useful purpose, so long as to be a nuisance. Convention should never be observed at the expense of efficiency. I deal with the dimensions and style of the most serviceable whips in the appropriate chapter.

If astride riders find their seat is not as secure as they could wish, let them put themselves under a good teacher who will show them how to adjust their stirrups and to place their legs, heels and hands; who will explain the theory and demonstrate the practice of balance and will put them through a reasoned course of instruction. Then, and then only, if they still find that they cannot sit firmly enough should they consider a change to a seat that is really only a makeshift.

X

YOUR CHILD'S PONY

" A Pony like a feather bed
On four short sticks . . .
MASEFIELD

No one can excel in any art unless he begins to learn the technique in his extreme youth, and this is truer of riding than of any other art. If, therefore, you wish your children to become " fellows of the horse " in later years let them start young. But the difficulty is to foster a liking and also to avoid, through discomfort and actual danger, a definite distaste.

Very few children, especially boys, take kindly to riding without great encouragement from their elders, but because later in life it becomes a great source of health, exhilaration, and pleasure, no effort should be spared to induce youngsters to learn. Even if there comes a period during which they have to give up temporarily, the early experience makes it easy for them to take up riding again.

Writing on this subject " Crascredo " gives us good and picturesque guidance. If ever there is doubt as to whether a man has begun young enough, he says that the corn bin is there to settle the question, " for as soon as you can put your head and shoulders in a corn bin *without* your feet waving in the air it is too late."

It is impossible to over-estimate the hygienic and educative value of riding, especially if coupled with the *care* of a pony. All the desirable qualities of body, mind, disposition and temperament are improved. Riding is the healthiest form of out-

door exercise, and there is nothing better for a child's physique and deportment.

From another point of view a rider is constantly pitting his intelligence and determination against the strength of an animal of great persistence, one whose instinct prompts him to avoid domination, and with whom it is necessary to exercise the greatest patience and self-control, often courage also. Then again, as the domesticated horse lives under unnatural conditions, he is a helpless creature, entirely dependent on man for his food, comfort and health. His lot is a hard one, but it can be lightened by considerate and sympathetic treatment, not only at his work but still more in the stables, where four walls prevent him from exercising his natural instinct, which is to seek safety in flight. If a child is taught to appreciate this, his pony will be something more to him than a means of locomotion, and becomes an object of care and consideration as well.

A child should make friends with his pony *in* the stables as well as outside, and should be shown that although he can at first give his new friend some dainty by way of breaking the ice, he should not encourage this cupboard love, and he will soon find that human society is appreciated for its own sake and that his visits will always be welcome.

As a preliminary to any instruction I have to give on the breaking of a pony for a child to ride, or on improving the manners of children's ponies generally, it will be necessary to bear in mind that children of different ages, size and temperament, require different qualifications in their mounts, and that, like adults, they do not start with uniform requirements. So in the choice of a suitable animal the questions of the child's age, build, disposition and even his home surroundings are

inseparable from the choice of a pony and from the consideration of the pony's schooling.

In the show ring one sees such heterogeneous collections of children and ponies, and such varying types, ages and sizes, that even among the prize winners it is useless to seek for guidance.

One sees instructed and well turned out youngsters, the children of riding-masters and dealers, making a marvellous show, on perfectly broken and balanced blood ponies, and the contrast between them and the pathetic candidates from homes with little riding experience and less horsy tradition is most marked.

The judges always appear to me to make their task harder by asking themselves this question, " Must I give the first prize to the pony that best suits his rider or must I select as the winner the best looking, best moving pony so long as his rider can control him ? " On reflection one must see that the first method opens the door to misunderstanding and that the latter course is the fairest to adopt.

What so often happens is that the smallest and quaintest child invariably calls forth the greatest applause, regardless of the excellence of the pony and the child's ability to handle it, and many judges are weak enough to give them a prize both for their pony and for their riding. This is generally followed by another burst of applause. I remember once acting as Steward at a local show and helping to catch one of the children's ponies that had unshipped his rider (actually he threw himself off) after first bolting with him. He pluckily remounted and the crowd gave him a great ovation. This was, of course, very good-natured of the spectators, but when the pony got second prize, and the youngster was presented with the cup awarded to the

A child should make friends with his pony

best rider, it must have been very sad and discouraging for the owners of entirely suitable ponies, very prettily and effectively ridden.

If I wanted to bet on the result of the children's classes at most shows, my selection would be the pony with the tiniest and quaintest rider, the one that invariably invokes the applause or the laughter. It is, no doubt, very delightful to give happiness to an attractive child, but there are the other competitors to consider.

As I said before one should bear in mind that besides teaching the child to ride it will be necessary to give him confidence, and to get him to *enjoy* riding as well as to prefer it to the mechanical contrivances with which he is surrounded now-a-days.

It is often debated at what age boys and girls should begin, but as most, if not all, fine horsemen and horsewomen have begun quite young, there is no reason why children should not make a start at six or seven, if they are strong and well-grown and if a suitable narrow pony is secured. A donkey is not a bad thing to start on, but his leathery mouth, thick hide and insensitive sides make him less susceptible to indications of leg and bit, so that, when the eventual change comes to a pony a child's aids require refining, and much time and attention is necessary to adapt them to the new conditions. He will possess wrong ideas of the sensibility of his mount. These ideas are difficult to eradicate, and the process of unlearning is always irksome and uncertain. A donkey is apt to take charge of the proceedings, and because of the insensibility mentioned above, he will defy bit, leg and whip.

Nevertheless, a donkey is useful to give confidence, grip and balance, and then, when the pupil is ten or twelve years

old, proper riding instruction on a suitable pony and by a competent teacher, should begin.

My children all began on a donkey, so I speak from experience. My eldest boy used to ride this donkey to and from his dame's school, a mile and a half away. One half-holiday he announced his intention of going for a long ride. Later I asked him where he had been, and to his confusion, he had to admit that he had been obliged to ride to his school and back, which was the only journey " Balaam " would undertake ; but he had made it three times, which gave him his long ride.

For quite young children (failing a donkey) I advocate a very small pony, one that they can play with as a toy, and, after a short lapse of time, even without the supervision of their elders. For this reason it should be about two and a half to three years old, and it and the child should both be receiving instruction at the same time. The teaching of the child is thus inseparable from the breaking of the pony, and they should, as it were, grow up together. The resistance to control of a small pony at this age is almost negligible, it is a short and simple process to teach it to carry a saddle and to be led about, and the child also gains confidence as the pony becomes experienced and strong. By imperceptible stages they both reach the point when the leading rein can be dispensed with. There is no surer way of getting youngsters to take to riding. This is preferable to buying a pony that has already been carrying children, in which case I do not think they start fair, the one knows too much and the other too little ; the pony will be too full of confidence and the child too timid and uncertain.

It is a well-nigh hopeless task to restore the confidence of a child that has been badly startled by a fresh and knowing pony, or by a pony whose temperament and manners were

suitable enough until it had been mishandled by a foolish or inexpert adult. So if at first it falls to the lot of a nurse or governess to lead the pony (which so often happens) she should learn the correct way to do this. She must know when coercion is necessary, when the pony should get a tap with the whip, when it must be coaxed and when rewarded. She must not be afraid of it or she will soon affect both her charges. A woman unused to a pony is very apt to look upon it either as a wild beast, or, on the other hand, to try to treat it like a pet dog. This misapprehension is by no means confined to folk who can be expected to know no better. I once came upon a grown man (a novice I need hardly say) out hunting who had been thrown at a fence and who was pursuing his loose horse across a field, calling " Diana, Diana." Someone said, " All right, I'll catch her for you," whereupon he expressed his thanks, and added apologetically, " She is very young and doesn't answer to her name yet."

It is also important to school the pony to be a free mover. Free forward movement is never so likely to tire a rider of any age or to give him a fall as is the tendency to slow up, stop or shy ; with a free mover a child will instinctively hang on to the reins and get it stopped, but he can have no idea how to deal with a nappy pony, which is bound to upset his nerves, even if it does not actually unseat him.

I am thankful to say that the old-fashioned, fat, butty pony is no longer in favour ; knowledgeable people to-day insist on the narrow, well-made blood type, with long rein and smooth action ; in fact, with the desirable characteristics of the thoroughbred horse. It is important, however, to bear in mind that such ponies, with the necessary mouth, manners and temperament, must be rare and therefore cannot be cheap. So I suggest that

Pursuing his loose horse across a field, calling " Diana, Diana "

the same care and attention be devoted to the selection of a suitable pony for the children and to its breaking as is given to the selection of the parents' hunters. I regret to say that this is often not the case. Further, diet, exercise and condition, as well as suitable saddlery and bitting, are equally important for both.

It is not easy to find a groom small or light enough to school such an animal and to keep it exercised and mastered, so we must ask ourselves how can this be compassed. There is no doubt that exercise in harness—and a good riding pony makes the best harness pony—so long as it is not overdone, answers well. Of course long reining is better still, but with very small ponies some means must be devised to improvise tackle small enough—to buy which would probably cost as much as the pony.

For the foundation of true fellowship a child's pony should be dog-quiet in the stable. There is a tendency with some people to look upon their mount as a means of locomotion that concerns them only after saddling, but if their ponies are systematically taught not to be suspicious or resentful, so that the children can go into their boxes alone and at any time, it will be a long stride towards encouraging them to care for them in the stable as well as outside, and towards making them horsemen in the wide and correct sense of the term. To them only is the fellowship open.

Great pains must also be taken to make the child's pony quiet to mount, as there is a danger of injury (physical and to the nerves) if he starts forward or to one side before the rider is settled in the saddle.

An elementary idea of the psychology of the horse, especially in what direction it differs from our own, should be given

to children, so as to prevent inconsistent treatment ; for a child to handle the pony as a pet one minute and as a slave the next, is bad for both, and to expect too wide an understanding also leads to trouble. Some ponies that have been used to children all their lives learn to adapt themselves, but there is a limit even to *their* patience, and they are apt on occasions to rebel and to decide to take matters into their own hands, or rather mouths. It always amuses me to see an old pony calmly grazing while two children argue as to whose turn it is to ride, or, if there is nothing worth grazing, settling the dispute by trotting home to the stables.

It is unwise to feed children's ponies on corn, unless they have very regular exercise in harness or in the long reins. On the other hand, they should not be kept at grass, as they get too fat and sluggish.

Until children are ten years old their ponies can be trained and fed so that, as far as possible, all vice is eradicated ; thus the main causes of discomfort, fear and falls, which it is important to avoid, are removed, and there is hope that their keenness may survive until they reach the age when real instruction can be given. Then their ponies should be big and strong enough for a groom to ride and keep exercised ; in fact, I advocate the polo pony height and type as soon as possible, not polo failures, but potential players whose characters and manners have not been impaired.

The training of these larger ponies can be on the lines I have laid down in *Bridle Wise*.

XI

CHILDREN IN THE HUNTING-FIELD

" Every child comes with a message that God
is not yet discouraged of man."

TAGORE

THERE was a time when it was imagined that skilful riding and driving was the Englishman's birthright and the fellowship was easier to attain.

Lord Willoughby de Broke has written ably and exhaustively on the hunting and coaching days from 1800-1850, when the great system of mail and stage coaches was working smoothly. Wonderful organisation there must have been in order to horse the innumerable coaches running daily in all directions. What is more they kept to scheduled time, and it is interesting to picture this vast system perfectly interlocked and controlled from various centres. It would be a great feat nowadays ; what must it have been before the days of motors, telephones and telegraphs, with possible dislocation caused by bad weather, lame and sick horses, by illness amongst grooms, strappers, drivers and guards. Fine coachmen they must have been and skilful horse-masters, to say nothing of their genius for organisation.

Hunting, too, was at its best just about then. There was no wire to prevent a man from riding his own line and few railways, no tarmac roads to cut up the country, and no motor-cars to destroy scent. It is said that hunting was slower then, but the miles horse and man had to cover in the course of a day's hunting made up for this.

Riding and driving were almost the only means of rapid locomotion, and hunting, fishing and shooting about the only amusements. Compare the conditions of life to-day. The distractions are so numerous, motor-cars, golf, lawn-tennis, the cinema, and dancing, which is now an institution instead of a pastime, all these take up time, thought and money. The writer's recollection goes back forty years, and it was then the aim of every young man to be able to ride and drive. Most of them, indeed, were *made* to learn by their parents.

Nowadays, with the plentiful bad riding and the lack of inclination to improve it, it is difficult to feel very optimistic. We have had some rude awakenings in our defeats by the American, Argentine, American Army and the Jodpur polo teams, and by continental competitors in the Olympian jumping contests. The superior horsemanship and riding of these players and riders from abroad were our undoing.

There are many children out hunting to-day, but most of them are sadly in need of instruction and practice. Mighty keen they are to hunt, but I doubt if their keenness would persist if they had to take time from other amusements for the drudgery of riding-lessons. In the old days one could hardly help picking up a certain amount, even without lessons, because ponies were used to hack about on, in fact holidays were often spent in riding and driving tours, and every village inn advertised " Good Stabling " and boasted a more or less competent ostler.

It will be seen, therefore, that there is *an urgent* need for riding-schools, competent teachers, and, above all, a desire in our young people to learn.

It is easy to point out shortcomings, to be helpful with practical suggestions is difficult. Something must be done

unless this country is to be satisfied with a humble position as far as riding is concerned. Where is a youngster to learn the stable lore which used to be traditional ?

It must be realised that there is no " natural " seat in the saddle and no " natural " way of holding the reins or of controlling a horse, any more than there is a natural stance at golf or a natural way of gripping and swinging. A good instructor is necessary in either case, one who will form the golfer's stance and swing or the horseman's seat and poise, with due regard to each pupil's make and shape. How much will a man achieve and what will his style be like if he tries to play golf by the light of nature ; the answer is : " As much as he will if he tries to excel at riding without competent teaching."

Now, how can our present-day youngsters be taught enough elementary horsemanship to see that a modest stud is properly cared for, *whether at home or at livery*, and to ride well enough to take their place creditably in the hunting-field or in a game of polo ? It is difficult to be anything but pessimistic. Our present-day youth does not take kindly to this kind of tuition, and the drudgery entailed does not make much appeal in these days when there are so many counter-attractions.

First of all there should be a complete course of the riding-school such as a cadet gets at Sandhurst or at the R.M.A. During this course the pupil should be taught to mount correctly, how to hold the reins, the correct adjustment of his stirrup-leathers and the best position in the saddle. All this sounds very rudimentary and simple, but both in the hunting-field and on the polo ground lamentable examples of ignorance on these points will be seen.

The very confusing vocabulary of riding should be explained to him. What are the " aids " and how does their combined

Continental competitors in the Olympian jumping contests

application go to make what is known as " hands." What is meant by " making a horse go up to his bit," when is a horse " behind his bit," and what is the disadvantage of it. In fact, the hundred and one things he will hear mentioned in the course of a horsy conversation, and which, without adequate explanations, must remain mere words to him. He should be taught enough of the anatomy of the horse to appreciate the value of a correct carriage of the head and neck and to judge whether he is correctly shod, and for this he must of course learn how to approach a horse in the stables and how to pick up his feet. Then a course of instruction on dietary, on the fit of saddlery and the adjustment of the bridle, and curb chain. He must learn how to open a horse's mouth, so that he can examine the bars for injury and the molars to ascertain their condition. When the writer has been judging the best turned out ponies at polo gymkhanas and shows he has been struck by the faulty fitting of saddles and bridles, incorrectly adjusted martingales, dangerous clinchings, etc. In these preliminary lessons the novice should also learn stable management generally and the correct way a groom should jog out a horse, so that he may test him for soundness the morning after work.

All the above are simply beginnings and will seem very elementary to the man brought up amongst horses, but it must be remembered that most of the older generation now living and now disappearing from hunting and polo, were brought up amongst horses, which, except for the railway, were then the only means of travel. Nowadays, unless a boy's parents are hunting or polo people, his chances of gaining intimate knowledge of horse life are remote. The motor-car is now the means of road locomotion and harness horses and hacks have practically disappeared, except from the show ring. How many

youngsters hunting and playing polo to-day could successfully face an examination on the above elementary subjects? I had an idea of the depths of their ignorance from my experience in the Army during the War, when, even from youngsters who asked to be excused from the usual course of riding on the plea that they had ridden all their lives, the answers were unbelievably ridiculous.

Where can this be learnt? One almost despairs of devising a plan to replace efficiently the traditions and opportunities of the old horsy days, unless our youngsters can be persuaded to avail themselves of a riding-school and a riding-master. It is pleasant to those who have the welfare of the horse at heart, to note that there is to-day a definite increase in riding, even among those with no horsy traditions.

Were it not for hunting and polo there would now be little use for the saddle-horse, but I am convinced that it is a case of supply creating the demand, and any competent teacher of riding who is enterprising enough to start a school in or near a hunting country, may feel reasonably sure of support. Parents are not slow to recognise the educative value of riding for their children, and, as I am never tired of pointing out to them, all the desirable qualities of body, mind, disposition and temperament are improved by learning horsemanship.

But apart from this, one of the objects of children learning to ride ought surely to be that they may take their place creditably in the hunting-field, to see the whole of a hunt from start to finish in reasonable comfort and safety to themselves, their horse and their fellows.

It is in the Christmas holidays that a noticeable change comes over the hunting-field. We arrive at the Meet one day, and find a sprinkling of children on ponies, both child and pony

looking either scared or self-conscious at finding themselves in the middle of an unaccustomed throng of scarlet-coated men, towering above them on full-sized horses. The next day there will be a few more, the next more still, and by the last Meet before Christmas about a third of the entire field will be made up of children of all shapes and sizes, ranging from the fifteen-year-old youngster in smart riding kit, on one of his father's polo ponies, and looking as if he or she had been born in the saddle, to the fat little girl of six, who with great difficulty bestrides an unsuitable, unclipped Shetland pony.

Both have probably been counting the minutes in anticipation, and both are determined to enjoy themselves thoroughly ; the fifteen-year-old—it may be his eighth or ninth season—is going to " have a dart " and make a laudable attempt to pick his own line when hounds run ; the girl has never been out before, she can't ride, but even if she could, her pony is too wide for her, its make and shape are entirely unsuitable, and it will probably have a mouth of iron and a will of the same metal. Her clothes don't fit her, and many wrinkles make her very sore, probably she is so before she arrives at the Meet, and one cannot help thinking that this, her first day, is going to be a great disappointment to her.

I was once riding with a lady between coverts, when a man called our attention to a small girl ahead of us ; she was riding astride, but sitting half off her saddle, all contorted and screwed up. " Just look at that poor deformed child," he said, " fancy her parents allowing her to ride." Now this child was my friend's own daughter, not in the least deformed, but her ill-fitting clothes and saddle too small for her, had rubbed her so sore on her first day out in the holidays, that only her extreme keenness made her face what must have been a very uncom-

That they may take their place creditably in the hunting-field

fortable if not a painful ride on this, her second day. The trouble is that children grow out of riding kit and out of their saddles and ponies also, and parents are therefore often reluctant to spend much on either, but I maintain that they are unwise and that no trouble should be spared to have all three entirely suitable, regardless of inconvenience.

Perhaps it is rather a trite remark to say that the future of hunting depends on whether children enjoy themselves in the hunting-field or not, but as this is so, it is for the grown-ups to see that they not only enjoy themselves, but that they become keen and well informed as well, and to a certain extent the terms are synonymous.

So, having dressed and mounted our children suitably, and having got them a saddle that fits, the next thing we must do is to teach them riding *and hunting*.

While I was considering how to approach this question, there occurred to me an anecdote which my father used to tell. One very cold day a small child was asked why he was crying, and on being told it was because his hands were so cold, the enquirer said, " Serves you right, why doesn't your mother buy you gloves ? "

Is there not something of this irrational point of view in the attitude of the experienced towards the mistakes and difficulties of children out hunting ? When they endanger their lives (and often ours) ought we not to reserve our indignation entirely for their parents who have failed in their obvious duty, which was to have their children taught to ride, to mount them on controllable ponies and to see that they are instructed in the elementary points of hunting etiquette ? This is the least they can do. In addition, children should have their interest stimulated by having the somewhat complicated procedure of hunting

explained, the history and traditions of the chase are also important, and last, but not least, there is much to be learned about the life and duties of a fox-hound. What are the qualifications of a good hound and where does a bad hound fail ? I can only touch on the general principles of so extensive a subject. It is a pity that children are so often, as it were, pitchforked into the hunting-field uninstructed, uncomfortably dressed, badly mounted, and in a state of trepidation, the result of not knowing where to go and what to do.

The place to learn the art of riding, as we have seen in Chapter VII, is undoubtedly the riding-school, but I must repeat, that it is difficult to understand the present-day objection that hunting people have to allowing—or I should say insisting on —their children having riding-lessons in a school. Of course, there is drudgery involved, so there is in mastering the elementary principles of other sports and pastimes, but with them we do not find the same reluctance to benefit by a course of competent instruction. Boys are only too pleased to have their style formed by a cricket coach, and no one of any age who wants to take up golf, would willingly omit lessons from a professional ; so how can one explain the attitude towards an art far more difficult than golf and at least as difficult as the violin ? And yet one's eyes and susceptibilities are as often offended in the hunting-field as are one's ears and musical perception elsewhere.

Books on all games are read with avidity, and wherever possible the aid of a professional teacher is sought, but the science of equitation, as well as style and elegance in the saddle, and a knowledge of hunting are so often expected to come of themselves. I believe that the desire for expert coaching, even in cricket, is of comparatively recent birth, and certainly lawn tennis and golf only came into the category of coached games

after our ascendency was threatened by "foreign competition," so is it not time we considered how to meet the increasing difficulty in getting youngsters to spend their spare time in riding instead of motoring?

Then, when they can ride well enough, a hunting pilot should be engaged, to show them the way across country, to teach them what is jumpable and what is not, and when to wait their turn at a gate or gap, when to wait for a lead and when to pick their own place.

Such a pilot is nearly always procurable, but he must be a man of experience in the hunting-field, with a knowledge of hound work and familiar with the country, so that he can guide his pupil back to hounds if they find themselves thrown out owing to pace, wire, or fences beyond their scope. One of the chief qualifications of such a pilot is that he should have no thought of his own enjoyment, and that he should be unselfish enough to devote himself to his pupils and to make allowances for their inexperience.

It is often argued that most good men to hounds never had a riding-lesson in a school or the luxury of a pilot, but this does not mean that they would not have attained their proficiency years earlier had they but had this expert instruction, instead of having to find it all out by experience and adversity.

Anyway, if we wish our children to enjoy their hunting, as indeed they have every right to, and incidentally other folks to welcome them out hunting, all the points I have touched on should be considered.

The LANGUAGE *of* FELLOWSHIP

XII

HORSY LANGUAGE

" Say as you think, and speak it from your souls."
SHAKESPEARE

My third interpretation of the fellowship of the horse suggests, if not a language of its own, at all events a special vocabulary. Horsy language is adequate and expressive enough, but amongst horsemen only, although one could wish that it were freer from jargon. Each sport in this country has taken to itself a separate conventional costume as well as a conventional language. The horsy vocabulary, besides being conventional, is largely traditional also. Like everything else connected with horsemanship, however, it must be acquired young, otherwise it were better to use straightforward expressive English rather than to risk a howler.

One wonders how the expressions current among horsemen came into being, and why everyday language when applied to horsy matters, should be so incongruous.

" Please, sergeant, my horse won't pick his seed," said a recruit driver, wishing to report that his horse was off his feed.

The maid who so efficiently looks after my hunting kit, alludes to my rich and rare, pre-war buckskin breeches, which nowadays cost as much as a green pony, as my " suède trousers," and I knew a small girl who used to call polo breeches " polo drawers."

I read somewhere in a story of a man quite unused to horses who hired a caravan for a holiday. The horse was

old and blasé and the only response to the whip was no increase of speed but merely " a hurried re-arrangement of his feet."

Only the very expert can allow himself latitude of expression, and can talk of a horse's ankles and allude to bandages as puttees, and we generally find that only those whose erudition is lately acquired take obvious pains to be correct in their phraseology. I must agree that if one knows that a man (or woman) lacks experience this meticulously correct phraseology sounds rather affected, while one misapplied word stands out glaringly and makes one positively uncomfortable.

I treasure a letter from a woman who, trying to sell and describe a friend's active, surefooted hunter wrote, " she's very handy with her feet."

" Why does my horse get so out of breath ? " a young woman in her first hunting season once asked me. I know of a lady who, suspecting her horse of being a whistler, telephoned to her veterinary surgeon and asked him " to come and examine her horse's breath as her groom said it was bad." The last two however are tolerable, for there is no attempt to ape the language of the extremely horsy.

The other day I asked a schoolboy at a check whether his pony had jumped the brook, and could not help being tickled when he replied, " No, he just waded."

Can horsy language have changed much ? The following is from Henry IV and sounds to me very like the conversation between two present-day grooms.

The scene is an inn yard.

1st Carrier : I pri'thee, Tom, beat Cut's saddle, put a few flocks in the point, the poor jade is wrung in the withers out of all cess.

2nd Carrier : Pease and beans are as dank here as a dog, and that is the next way to give poor jades the bots : this house is turned upside down since Robin Ostler died.

1st Carrier : Poor fellow ! never joyed since the price of oats rose ; it was the death of him.

The extreme desire for correctness is not confined to horsy language. I doubt if there is another game or sport where incorrect turnout excites so much comment and even ridicule, whether the perpetrator ought to know better or not. An ex-master of hounds, a man with a life experience of hunting, turned out with one spur inadvertently the wrong way up. An officious fellow-member, after calling everyone's attention to the solecism, rode up to him and asked, " Do you always ride with your left spur upside down ? " to which the old man, with great presence of mind, replied, " Yes, always with this horse."

It is safe to bet that if I turn out on a horse with a shaggy coat, some busybody will come up and make a rude remark such as, " Is your horse very difficult to clip ? "

A young fellow I know called on friends in the course of an exercising round, and realising that his horse's somewhat hairy heels were as yet untrimmed, he forestalled criticism by remarking as soon as he saw all eyes fixed on the luxuriant fetlocks—" Oh, those are left there on purpose, so that anyone riding behind doesn't get splashed."

One sees herefrom how important it is for " fellows " to be forearmed and ready with a riposte.

There are signs, too, in the horsy vocabulary of a reluctance to face unpleasant truths ; thus a horse with a stringhalt is " apt to snatch a hock a bit." A crib-biter " has been seen to get hold of the manger," while a horse with incipient cataract

has " a speck in his eye." A horse with a spavin has a " strong hock," and a lame, unsound horse " does not pull out too well after a day's hunting."

I once asked a dealer whether a certain horse we were discussing was sound in his wind, and he replied, " Well, you just *can*." Of course one knew what he meant, just as one knows that if a horse is described as " a patent safety " he is as slow as a man and as idle as a bricklayer, and no self-respecting owner would say of the most determined puller more than that " he takes hold a bit."

All this leads one to the awful thought, is horsy language the language of subterfuge and deceit ?

" Jumping off his hocks " is an expression that always intrigues me. It is used in commendation, but as far as I can make out it describes a horse that, while clearing his fences, gets too close to them for comfort. If there is any other meaning I have yet to hear it.

Then there is the intentionally jocular, describing " hogging " as " shingling," " tail trimming " as " bobbing," " balling " as " giving a pill " and " hunting " as " fox catching."

There is also another phase, and a groom, trying to copy the veterinary surgeon, will " diagnize " the horse's ailments, and will tell you he noticed the cough and the loss of appetite began " simultuously."

One does not nowadays hear spurs called " Latchfords " or " persuaders " any more than one would expect to hear a horse described as " spirited " or " frisky." Horsy language is picturesque and used to be even more so ; in my youth, in Yorkshire, one often heard of " warrages " and " oven " or " hugging bones " instead of withers and hips.

During the war, I had to train several lots of transport

They speak of hogging as shingling

drivers, sent to us from infantry battalions, to be taught riding, driving and stable management. I remember asking one huge fellow, who had rejoined from the Navy, what qualifications he thought he had to ride and look after horses and mules. After telling me that his knowledge of knotting and splicing would enable him to " lash their cargoes," he added that he thought also that he could " tow a mule."

A countryman whom I asked whether he had seen hounds, replied, " No, but I've eered th' bugle."

In Ireland, the hyperbolic mode of expression and gesture varies monotony. It always amuses me to see the eye of an Irish horsedealer wander round the cornice of the room or the stable eave, to find something suitable wherewith to compare the height of the fence that his horse has " lepped," and once, when I was in the throes of buying a horse, I asked the owner how it compared in speed with his once celebrated mare, " Tacit." " Why," said he with fine scorn, " You could tie up one of his fore legs and he could beat ' Tacit ' backwards." Picturesque possibly, but inexact, although one would gather that in his opinion the horse in question was the faster of the two.

I always take a delight, too, in the Ross and Somerville farmer, who, wishing to describe how brisk business had been at a local fair, said that if a man had had a horse there and it had been a dog he would have sold it.

Picturesque language, however, is not confined to Ireland, and a dealer here, describing a series of transactions too complicated to set down, but where a horse was sold, re-bought, re-sold and finally came again into his possession all in forty-eight hours, delivered himself of the following : " But, bless you, sir, I don't care ; they can chop and change any way

'A voluntary' describes the most involuntary act of a man on horseback

they've a mind ; it all makes no difference to me so long as a bit of moss keeps sticking to the old stone."

The tendency to say " learn " where " teach " is meant is also noticeable, and, as if this were not sufficiently ungrammatical, the pronunciation is broadened to " larn," which seems to me to give it a sinister and a somewhat vindictive sound.

The horsy man's animals are never good leapers, but good " leppers " ; training is only applicable to horses being prepared for racing ; the word to describe the preparation for hunting, hacking and polo is schooling ; thus, " training a horse for jumping " would convey the idea of a preparation for a season's steeplechasing. " A chop " is a part exchange, " clover root " is clover, and " a voluntary " describes the most involuntary act of a man on horseback.

The Americans, with their scorn of tradition, have discarded much of our phraseology, and have a vocabulary of their own ; for instance, amongst other variations, they not only give the height of their horses, but their weight as well, and can anyone tell me the meaning of the expression so often seen in their horse advertisements, what is a " three-gaited horse " and wherein does he differ from a five-gaited one ?

I will finish this chapter with a plea and a suggestion. I would ask the " fellows " to be more helpful to their less informed brothers and tactfully to seize occasions to place their knowledge at their disposal, and to do so without being either " superior " or contemptuous. It is discouraging for the beginner to have his solecisms received with derision, indeed I have known it have the effect of putting a man off riding altogether.

And I would suggest to the beginners that, instead of " muddling along," they should overcome their *mauvaise honte*,

that they should probe meanings and ask for explanations. Horsy language is not self-explanatory, and the origin of many of the expressions still in current use, is obscure. But there is no need for the " undergraduates " to flounder, the " fellows " are there to be " regular fellows and to put them wise." Finally it is, to say the least of it, unhelpful to spread funny stories about the tyro's howlers, and definitely unbecoming to be a horsy snob.

XIII

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HORSE IN FICTION, ETC.

" Some books are lies frae end to end."

BURNS

I BEGIN this chapter with extracts from two well-known authors,* both of which will show that what is meant by the fellowship of the horse can be understood, even though the writer may realise that it has escaped him.

> " I am neither a horseman nor even comfortable in a horse's presence. Quite the reverse. I am one to whom the horse is an unknown quantity. I have for horses and dogs an affection that most people seem to keep for their fellow men ; but although with dogs I am at home, I am totally at a loss to know how to deal with the larger creature. A horse's eye disquiets me : it has an expression of alarm that may at any moment be translated into action. I like to know where an animal is looking, and these bright, startled, liquid convexities never tell me.
>
> " I have been on a horse's back, it is true. I hired a horse and rode it over the South Downs for a fortnight ; but I never felt that there is true *rapport* between a horse and myself—I began too late. To understand horses and to be understood by horses, one must be brought up with them."

Elsewhere the same author gives a good idea of a horsy man, one to whom the fellowship has become second nature, in a conversation on the top of a coach, finishing with :

> " There ain't no sort of 'orse that I ain't bred. . . . 'Orses . . . is some men's fancy. They're wittles and drink

*E. V. Lucas and G. B. Shaw.

to me—lodging, wife and children—readin', writin' and 'rithmetic—snuff, tobacker and sleep."

And here is a quotation from the work of the other professed student of human nature :

"*Lady Utterword:* . . . I assure you, all this house needs to make it a sensible, healthy, pleasant house with good appetites and sound sleep in it, is horses.

Mrs. Hushabye: Horses ! What rubbish !

Lady Utterword: Yes, horses. Why have we never been able to let this house ? Because there are no proper stables. Go anywhere in England where there are natural, wholesome, contented and really nice English people, and what do you always find ? That the stables are the real centre of the household ; and that if any visitor wants to play the piano the whole room has to be upset before it can be opened ; there are so many things piled on it. I never lived until I learned to ride ; and I shall never ride really well because I didn't begin as a child. There are only two classes in good society in England : the equestrian classes and the neurotic classes. It isn't mere convention ; everybody can see that the people who hunt are the right people and the people who don't are the wrong ones."

One only wishes that the same clearness of vision were reflected generally in writing about horses, and in caricaturing horsy people.

The writer of horsy instruction, as well as the writers of fiction, are responsible for much misunderstanding. The former, either by wrapping up what should be straightforward instruction, in unappropriate scientific language, or in the other extreme by being sentimental over hard facts. The latter, not only through ignorance of the practical side of the subject, but because of wrong deductions from simple manifestations

which they have seen and have imperfectly understood. However, the bloomers (is there a politer word ?) are neither better nor worse, in dealing with this subject, than with others involving technical knowledge.

But I suppose we must hold the desire to " witch the world with noble horsemanship," responsible. Thus, in a novel written by a soldier, who indeed ought to know better, we read : " He watched the horse rise—just fail to clear—stumble and peck badly ; he saw the rider *literally lift it on to its legs again* and sail on with barely a perceptible pause." (The italics are, of course, mine.)

I once saw a play which enjoyed a certain measure of success, and in which the curtain rises on a lovely Midsummer scene. The herbaceous border was at its best, the hollyhocks were eight feet high and the young women in the flimsiest of muslin frocks. Enter the hero in full hunting kit. The only true detail was the fact that not a speck of mud had marred the spotlessness of his turnout after this Midsummer hunt. I have only to add that he carried a thongless crop upside down, to complete the picture.

I suppose no novelist or playwright would ever consult a lawyer, engineer, sailor or soldier for his facts, so why should he have recourse to a veterinary surgeon or a master of hounds ? I know nothing about the law, but I can be thrilled by an account of a trial in which a lawyer might detect a hundred technical errors, and so it may be asked, why should the sporting writer bother about accurate, technical details ? Has he not to cater for the million readers who know nothing of riding, hunting or polo ? Nevertheless, there is something fascinating in reading the work of a man who writes with the conviction which only knowledge of his subject gives him,

and his soundness is apparent, even to the uninitiated, in every line.

I was started off on this tack by being shown a very expensive bronze statuette, most beautifully executed, depicting two galloping polo ponies. The artist had modelled the riders in top boots and depicted them using the *end* of the head of their sticks (by no means an uncommon error), so I can only suppose that he had never seen a game of polo. I am old-fashioned enough to like my details something like correctly conceived and executed, both in art and letters; nor do I think a picture, statue or book can really carry conviction or even create a vivid impression, unless they display technical knowledge.

> " Look, when the painter would surpass the life,
> In limning out a well-proportioned steed,
> His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
> As if the dead, the living should exceed ;
> So did this horse excel a common one,
> In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone."

I am quite aware, however, that the idea of troubling at all about mere externals in art is antiquated, and that the new school merely wants an atmosphere, and details can go hang.

In fiction, it is undoubtedly true that great writers can take liberties with the technicalities of their subject. Where, for instance, can one find a more thrilling account of a polo match than in the *Maltese Cat*? I re-read it every now and then and it still gives me a lump in my throat. And yet, how unlike the real thing.

What has the author done to obtain a verisimilitude? First of all he has put into the minds of his main characters, the ponies, thoughts and aspirations as well as an appreciation

of the game and its rules, which really are the attributes of the human players only. And then he has made two appeals which never fail, he has made the poor strivers—who have to make shift as best they can—triumph over their more fortunate wealthy opponents. His hero meets with an accident and a dumb animal comes to his rescue, and, finally, he varies the fortunes of the competitors in so subtle a manner, that one's interest is sustained till the—no, not the last word, and here, I think, there should not have been a word written between the smack of that final goal and the pleasing glimpse of the "Maltese Cat" that same night after mess, and later in retirement.

As an extreme case I quote from an account of another devoted horse, this time an Arab called Sayyid, whose master, one Langton, has been taken prisoner by Wahhabis and is lying bound among his sleeping captors, while his horse is tethered some way off. The situation looks black for Langton, but we need not despair, for in the dead of night this is what happens :

> "And then the soft nose touched his face, and above him in the gloom stood Sayyid. . . . He had bitten through the halter, that had held him, with those strong white teeth of his, and picked his way between the slumbering Arabs until he reached his master's side.
>
> "Before Langton could guess what he was after, he caught in his mouth the ropes that bound him, just where they crossed and re-crossed the middle of his body. Holding him thus, Sayyid once more picked his way through the sleepers, moving as soundlessly as some dark shadow. Once beyond the encampment he broke into a swinging trot" (an Arab !) "carefully keeping the legs of his helpless burden clear of the ground.

" In this way he travelled on through the night, now and then laying Langton down for a brief moment, when the strain of carrying became too great. At such times he nosed him very gently, as though anxious to make sure he was living still. Memory and instinct, or was it love, guided him towards the Bedouins' encampment, and by morning he was so far on his way across the desert that Langton ceased to fear pursuit.

" And now, at last, Sayyid's great strength began to flag. His master's weight tested his endurance to the uttermost and his once fleet footsteps dragged wearily through the sand. Each breath he drew came out in a shuddering gasp, and each time he stopped, it was longer ere he could go on again. A merciful unconsciousness saved his master the agony of those last few miles, and when Sayyid, swaying dizzily, staggered with him into the Bedouins' camp, it seemed to them that a dying horse brought a man already dead."

Having shed a tear for the gallant Sayyid we need grieve no further, for we learn that :

" Langton lived to rejoin his regiment. He had aged ten years (his fellow-officers agreed), during the months he had been away."

More fortunate I, for the reading of this wonderful horse had quite a different effect ; there is nothing so rejuvenating as laughter.

In the following, I think there must have predominated some idea of the fond parent who wishes to see what is called, in nursery parlance, a " good head of hair."

Seafoam was the mother of this wonderful horse and she had been snow-white :

" But he was his famous sire over again—a bay with black points, and mane and tail. Ismail himself dressed his

coat each day that it might not lose its excellent texture, and his mane was clipped short when he was twelve months old that it might grow yet more strong and thick."

As the description is of a pure-bred Arab, one cannot help wondering what the feelings of a proud owner would be if his colt's mane grew " strong and thick."

The following, displaying a very exalted idea of a horse's intelligence, is worth quoting, if only to show how far a writer may be lured in a desire to give expression to her admiration for a well-loved animal.

The old doctor's horse is carrying him home after he has fallen asleep in the saddle :

" And so Jess carried him across the moor, picking her way that she might not shake him, and treading so lightly that the tiny flowerets 'neath her feet were scarcely injured."

Then comes a still more wonderful example of the fellowship of the horse, a degree certainly never dreamed of by me. The difficulty of balancing the sleeping doctor becomes too great and he is allowed to fall " into a cushion of heather," and, continuing his slumbers, is found by a gipsy who decides to rifle his pockets. But he reckons without Jess, who, to ward off his attack :

" Tossed her head and showed her strong white teeth."

The next is a scene to which only H. M. Bateman could do justice. A villainous horse called Rory, a savage who had defied everyone who tried to break him, including a private (*sic*) in the Artillery, falls into the hands of a young officer with " lint coloured hair." We are only told his nickname, which is " the dandy." He has such success with Rory, chiefly we gather by means of handfuls of corn, lumps of sugar, and endearing

Jess carried him across the moor, picking her way that she might not shake him

names, that finally, his reformation completed, he is ridden at the head of the troop, and we read :

> " To watch the way in which the thoroughbred moved was a delight to anyone who loved horses, and when, his rider having dismounted, he tucked his nose into his pocket for sugar, the men gave him a round of applause."

Eventually Rory, too old for the Service, is cast and falls into the hands of a " a frail old Minister " who used to ride him the round of his scattered parish. One day he too falls off, but unfortunately his foot remains caught up in the stirrup. He tells Rory that they will have to stay like that until someone comes to rescue them. Rory " snorts his scorn of such feeble comfort," and to put an end to the situation and also to get back to his " evening meal " takes the brim of " his wide felt hat " between his teeth and tries to raise him. Finding this no good, because of course the hat comes off, he gets him by the collar and lifts him off the ground.

> " To raise some ten stone and a dead weight is no easy task for an old horse, but Rory did it triumphantly. He could not neigh, for his mouth was full, but when he had lifted the old man high enough for him to free his foot, he shook him gently to show his meaning."

The parsŏn's wife and the horse had attained a fellowship to an unusual degree, for after kissing Rory in her deep gratitude for saving her husband's life, we learn that : " Being a dumb beast, Rory knew well that the best way to comfort her when she burst into tears upon his neck, was just to let her cry on, but now and then he nosed her hand, to show that he understood."

But we must regard the parson's wife as a most exceptional old lady, still retaining her schoolgirl complexion at the ripe

age of 130, for we read, " Now Rory's mistress had once been extremely pretty, and even at six score years and ten her pink and white complexion might have been envied by many a girl."

Well, if our youth is brought up on fare of this sort (and the above quotations are only isolated examples of scores of children's books) can we wonder at the want of understanding when they grow up ?

These stories really go too far into the realms of false sentiment, but I suppose there *are* people who like reading this sort of thing.

As an antidote, there are the books of Somerville and Ross, which, I take it, every horse lover has read, and if not he had better hurry up and do so. If something more than an antidote is indicated (I will not say an emetic) let him take up *Handley Cross*, or any other of Surtees' cynical books, he will find stark realism and no false sentiment there.

I give three quotations only from that truly remarkable book, *Dan Russel the Fox*. The story is dealing with a wounded horse, and some cottagers in the wilds had supplied the wherewithal for first aid : " Her practised fingers dealt speedily with the bootlaces and the crooked pins by means of which the rags were kept *in situ*. The horse drooped his long nose over her, and touched her hair at intervals with his lips."

" No, I'll not hurt you, poor boy," she said, accepting the warning."

That *is* fellowship and good psychology into the bargain.

Another incident I quote is the trial of a green horse, and the English 'prentice hand is looking on with admiration while the Irish squireen, a consummate horseman, puts the grey mare through her paces. The tyro, after " yearning exceedingly to know the hundredth part of what the rider knew

about a horse, was wondering incidentally how he contrived to make his shabby home-spun coat look as if it were well cut." " It seemed to Katherine that John Michael was doing nothing special, yet the mare at every stride went better and more collectedly." The trial proceeds " and still John Michael seemed to Katherine to be doing nothing beyond sitting lithely on the mare's back." Then Katherine tries her hand (on a side-saddle be it noted), and it is quite a different story. " When she trotted, Katherine felt as if she were sitting on the bows of a big boat in a rough sea ; when she cantered, which she did with entire amiability, it felt like riding over a succession of fences. How had John Michael appeared to sit upon her with the swaying ease that implies comfort ? How also, had he turned and twisted her like a polo pony ? "

When we consider that it is not only Katherine's first introduction to the grey mare but John Michael's also, what a subtle interpretation is this account (which should of course be read in its entirety) of my main definition of the fellowship of the horse !

In the course of a hunt that is described later in the book, the field is held up by an unexpected water-course. John Michael gives them a lead after picking the best take off and landing.

> " Then, pulling back from the drain some twenty yards through the marshy grass, he drove the chestnut mare at it with the sudden fire that is special and personal, like ' attack ' in music."

" Oh, my beloved 'earers," as John Jorrocks would say, grapple this to your soul, and as far as anything special and personal can be cultivated, try thus to attack your problems—those difficult and awe-inspiring occasions on which your good

hunter, instead of making up your mind for you, shows you that he is depending on you for the necessary decision and inspiration. We read on: "Her wild eye told that she was afraid of the water, but her faithful heart kindled with John Michael's."

H. A. Vachell in that admirable novel *The Yard* yields to two not uncommon temptations; he writes of his heroine's adventures with a forest pack of fox-hounds in the sporting jargon usually reserved to describe brilliant runs in the shires. And, secondly, he rather goes out of his way to air a horsy, if not a veterinary knowledge, by dragging in obscure and rare equine diseases. However, all is redeemed by the many delightful instances of his insight to the fellowship of the horse. To quote one:

"'Timbucktoo' could see hounds streaming across the field beyond. He could hear the intoxicating cry, the rejuvenating music. For this he had been born and bred. What are the thoughts that ravage a noble hunter degenerating into an aged hireling? Horses never forget, however philosophically they may accept indignities. 'Timbucktoo' had hammered over too many roads. They hurt his forelegs; they bruised his feelings."

I once read that Masefield could not have been a hunting man because he gives a hound the name of "Tarry breeks" and makes the master address the first whip by his surname. Are we to condemn his fellowship of the horse also because he writes that the big hunting stables were "*alive with din* from dawn until the time of meeting" or because he has a stable hand using *a rake* to clean out a stall?

It is a relief when the novelist writes about horsy matters without any of the jargon of the sporting press or the text-book

language of the veterinarian. Here is a description of a ride by the inimitable Saki :

" She went out riding with me, which was entirely her own suggestion, and as we were coming home through some meadows she made a quite unnecessary attempt to see if her pony would jump a rather messy sort of brook that was there. It wouldn't. It went with her as far as the water's edge, and from that point Mrs. Nicorax went on alone—of course I had to fish her out from the bank, and my riding breeches are not cut with a view to salmon fishing—it's rather an art even to ride in them. Her habit-skirt was one of those open questions that need not be adhered to in emergencies, and on this occasion it remained behind in some water weeds. She wanted me to fish about for that too, but I felt I had done enough Pharaoh's daughter business for an October afternoon, and I was beginning to want my tea. So I bundled her up on to her pony, and gave her a lead towards home as fast as I cared to go. What with the wet and the unusual responsibility, her abridged costume did not stand the pace particularly well, and she got quite querulous when I shouted back that I had no pins with me and no string. Some women expect so much from a fellow. When we got into the drive she wanted to go up the back way to the stables, but the ponies know they always get sugar at the front door, and I never attempt to hold a pulling pony ; as for Mrs. Nicorax, it took her all she knew to keep a firm hand on her seceding garments, which, as her maid remarked afterwards, were more *tout* than *ensemble*. Of course nearly the whole house-party were out on the lawn watching the sunset—the only day this month that it's occurred to the sun to show itself, as Mrs. Nic. viciously observed—and I shall never forget the expression on her husband's face as we pulled up. ' My darling, this is too much ' : was his first spoken comment ; taking into consideration the state of her toilet, it was the most brilliant thing I have ever heard him say, and I went

She made a quite unnecessary attempt to see if her pony would jump a rather messy sort of brook

into the library to be alone and scream. Mrs. Nicorax says I have no delicacy."

Compare the last example with the following, *not* from a veterinary book, but from a *novel*:

"Carefully scrutinising him, he notes quality all over; real cut of a National horse. What a beautifully-put-on well-bred head! a kind, intelligent eye with a general outlook of courage and character; a naturally curved and muscular neck, well-developed withers, great depth through the heart, in conjunction with lengthy, well-laid-back shoulders. What a magnificent fore-hand! What length of rein! Long, muscular fore-arm, big, bony knees; flat, wiry-looking legs, showing good bone with clean ligaments and tendons in parallel lines. No sign of wear in his fetlocks, as he was never hunted before he was five years old. Just the right slope and length of pastern, and standing on even, well-rounded feet with open heels and well-developed frogs. The chest of a weight-carrier, yet without unnecessary bulk. A strong, short back above well-rounded back ribs, joining up to remarkable powerful loins. Long quarters, which make a short-coupled horse stand over a lot of ground. Just a suspicion of a jumping bump at the top of his quarters, which fall with a very gradual curve to the point of his hocks; here again there is an appearance of scope and length from the hip to the hock. The latter is comparatively straight, though large and bony, and wide across when looked at from the front. The whole hind limb is well placed, bringing the shank below the hock, neither too far forward nor too far back, but perpendicular to the ground.

"Standing behind him the expert notices the arch of the hind-quarters with muscle on each side, forming with the muscular second thighs two completed figures of eight, supported on two symmetrical hocks. No, he can't fault him. Mr. X. had said that he wanted a good man just to start

him next season, and then he would be anybody's horse. Well, if he gets him he will see to that ! These high-couraged horses are sometimes spoilt before they are fool-proof—they get into the wrong hands and the seller is blamed."

And there is plenty more in the same strain.

Perhaps the author of the above had Shakespeare's lines in his mind and saw no reason why he should not go one better.

" Round-hoof'd, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad-breast, full eye, small head, and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide :
Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back."

Of course an author can err too far in the opposite direction. What a lot we learn for instance about the hero's horse, which he " sits like a centaur," when we read of his " satin coat," his " velvet muzzle " and his " liquid eye," and yet we all recognise what I may call " the knee deep in straw " school.

But, as I have already said, there can be too much licence and too much ignoring of probabilities. Here, for instance, is an account of a ride in post-war rural England. An American and his wife are part of a house party staying with a noble lord at his country place. It is Sunday, they have all attended morning service, and this is what happens :

" They rode, for the hour between Church and luncheon, on ragged but sturdy horses from the village stable. Mrs. Alls had lent a wreck of a riding habit to Fran, who looked disreputable and gay in her orange tam-o-shanter—gayer than in her ordinary taut sleekness. They rode from the village, through fields and shaggy woods, to the ridge of the North Downs.

"Suddenly Lockert and Fran left them, in a gallop along the pleasant plateau at the top of the Downs.

"In a quarter-hour Fran and Lockert came cantering back. She was laughing, she had taken off her tam, and her hair was wild."

The author might have completed this picture of rural England on a Sabbath morn by making his riding party meet the vicar, in shorts, returning from a run on the Downs.

Dipping casually into the books of instruction I will content myself with a few extracts.

I am sure my reader will recognise the style and think of many more that have come his way.

I feel I ought to apologise for including the following extracts under the title of this chapter, but, as I cannot reconcile them to hard fact, fiction they must be styled.

In a recent publication, for instance, we read that "A child's first pony should be used to children." I think the writer might have added more reasonably, "A pony's first owner should be used to ponies." In the same article we read that "The feet should rest naturally in the stirrups," but the author recognises the fallacy of this, so he contradicts himself in the *next line*—"Great care and patience should be used to get the toes higher than the heels."

In what I may call a standard work on polo we read the following:

"Another fruitful source of making ponies shy off the ball is the habit some riders adopt of not drawing back the left leg and pressing it against the pony's side (so as to prevent the hind quarters from swinging round to the left) at the moment when they lean to the off-side and forward in the act of striking the ball."

Now, in the first place, if the leg be drawn back, the rider's heel will touch his pony in the wrong place, too far back, instead of in the only correct place where it is effective, viz. : Just behind the girth. In the second place, if the pony has learned to obey the leg, he will turn his quarters, in obedience to leg pressure, across the line of the ball, about the worst fault a pony can contract ; while, if he has *not* been taught to obey the leg, it is impossible to predict what effect, if any, its pressure will have. As a matter of cold fact, a pony is just as liable to shy away with its fore-end, which necessitates correction by stronger leg pressure with the right leg than the left.

Now let us take an extract from another recent book on riding.—" Some people are very much concerned at a horse putting his tongue over the bit, and have all sorts of devices, like grid irons, to overcome the habit. Personally, I have never been able to understand why. I have ridden many horses with this trick, and unless I look I am unable to tell whether the tongue is over the bit or not.

" Left alone he will put it back again when he feels so inclined, and I think we should be satisfied with that."

Is there a rider in the world so far from the fellowship or so wanting in perception as not to know the fallacy of this ? I cannot imagine what the author was thinking of when he wrote it. Does not every horseman know the feeling, amounting to something akin to despair, when he realises that a horse is showing a tendency to contract this exasperating habit, for which there is no cure when once it is established, and which, whenever practised, destroys all control ?

I will content myself with one more quotation of an astonishing lapse which mars another recent and otherwise excellent work. In a chapter specially devoted to the schooling

of the polo pony the author is giving instructions how to pull up correctly, and, by way of assisting the seeker after light, he explains the pony's part in the manoeuvre, analysing the movement of each leg and the distribution of weight. I wish I could reproduce the illustration that accompanied his amazing explanation, as it exhibits nearly every fault, and, moreover, shows that the rider has had to take both hands to stop his pony. He writes : " The head is raised and the fore-hand tipped up instead of being propelled forward by the fore-legs. The hind legs are brought up close under the centre of gravity and take the weight, the hocks being kept bent to check propulsion, which would otherwise be obtained by straightening them. Great strain is put on the loins which must hold up the fore-hand, supported on the ground by the hind legs."

God help us !

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